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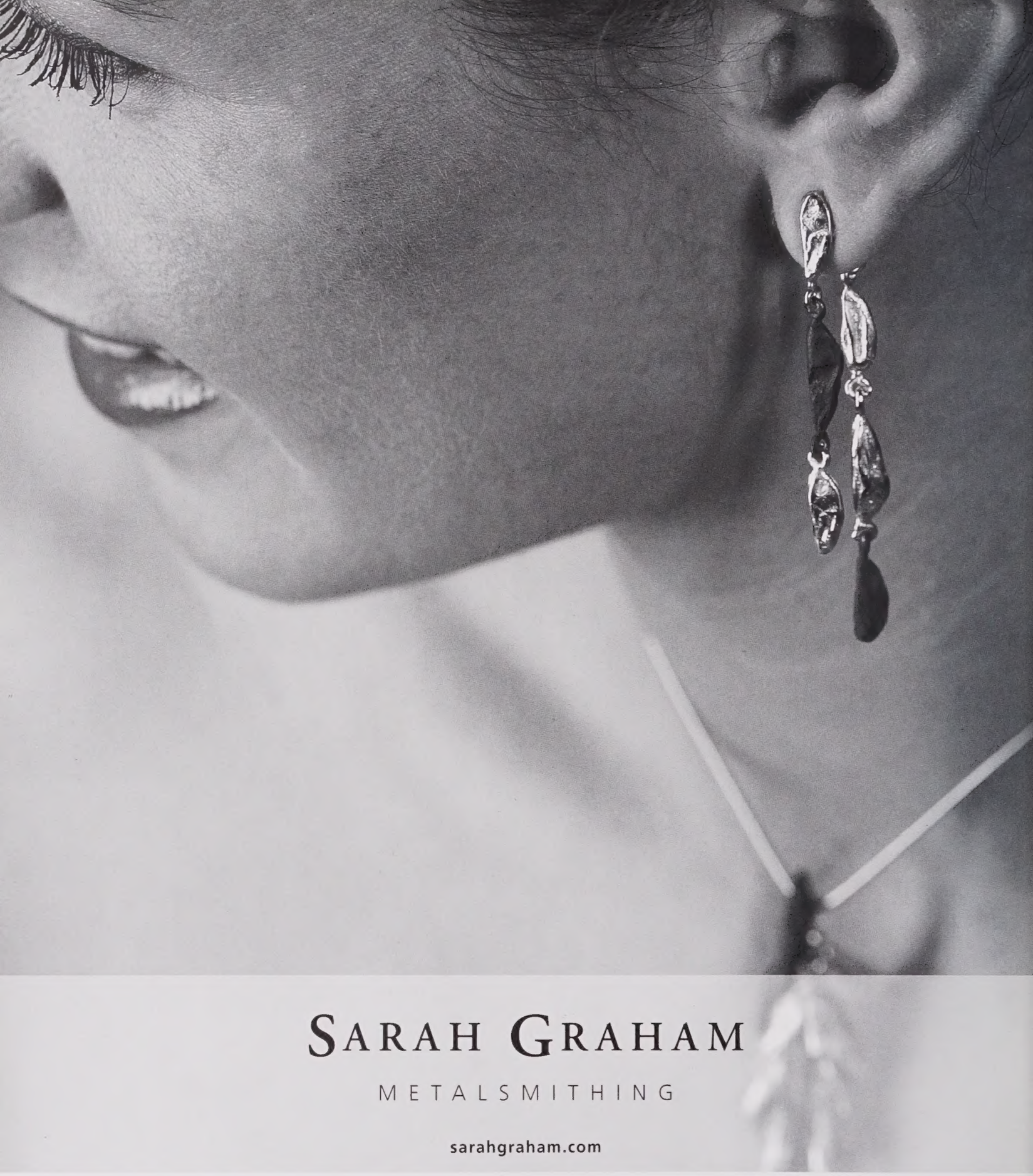

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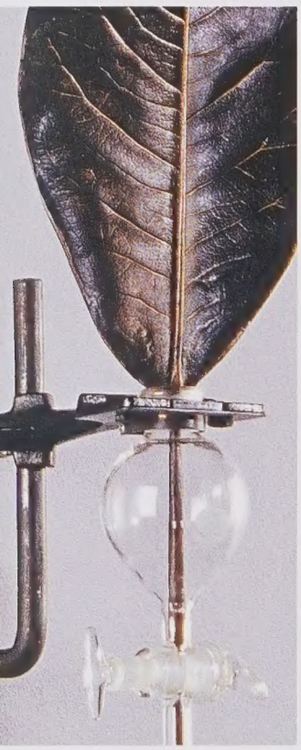

counterclockwise from top
Donald Stuart
Gloria in excelsis, 1989 (detail)
brass, copper, aluminum, purple heart, birch, mahogany, fabric appliqué
26' 3" x 5' 9"
Photo: Robert McNair

Beverly Penn
Separatory Globe 60 ML, from "Graft Series," 2000 (detail)
bronze, glass, steel
24 x 6 x 9"
Photo: Paul Bardagjy

Traditional Charm Bracelets (detail)
top: 1948-56, gold, 6 3/8" long
bottom: 1959-62, gold, 7 1/2" long
Collection Marge Levy
Photo: Larry Laurence

cover
Beverly Penn
Penumbra, 2000 (detail)
bronze
5 x 5 x 2'
Photo: Christopher Zaleski

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FROM THE EDITOR

SUZANNE RAMLJAK

The passionate bond between humans and objects provides much cause for wonder. It seems unnatural that sentient beings would love inanimate things, yet we cherish objects as if our happiness and lives depended on them. As David McFadden states in this issue's interview, "There is something that we bring to the encounter that allows a conversation to occur between a human and an object." This connection is intensified in the case of jewelry, where objects of affection are carried upon our very flesh.

Of course, the value of such things is not inherent, but rather the byproduct of our own investment. In true Pygmalion fashion, we endow objects with significance and then fall in love with our own creations. And over time, the value and meaning of an object only increases. "Objects are phenomenal sponges," according to McFadden, "they just keep absorbing more and more meaning."

Vicki Halper's article on contemporary charms underlines the ability of objects to harbor great sentiment and value. Traditional charm bracelets serve as three-dimensional time capsules, capturing life's events in miniature form. While contemporary examples sometimes subvert this mnemonic function, they are still chock-full of personal and cultural relevance.

Don Stuart's latest jewelry series, "Souvenirs," grew out of his international teaching activities in such far-flung locales as Sri Lanka and Costa Rica. These works physically embody his journeys—incorporating stones and other materials from various locations—and provide reminders of past encounters. They are tangible, wearable travelogues.

Whereas Stuart's jewelry is a souvenir of actual people and places, Beverly Penn's work (on our cover) expresses a desire for an unattainable realm. As author Glenn Brown argues, "Penn's works clearly hinge on the psychology of nostalgia and the dream of a lost classical equilibrium." Monuments to longing, Penn's sculptures reveal how objects can bring us physically closer to things we only dream of.

SR

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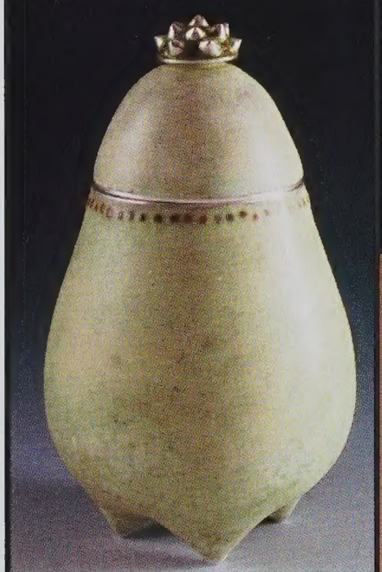

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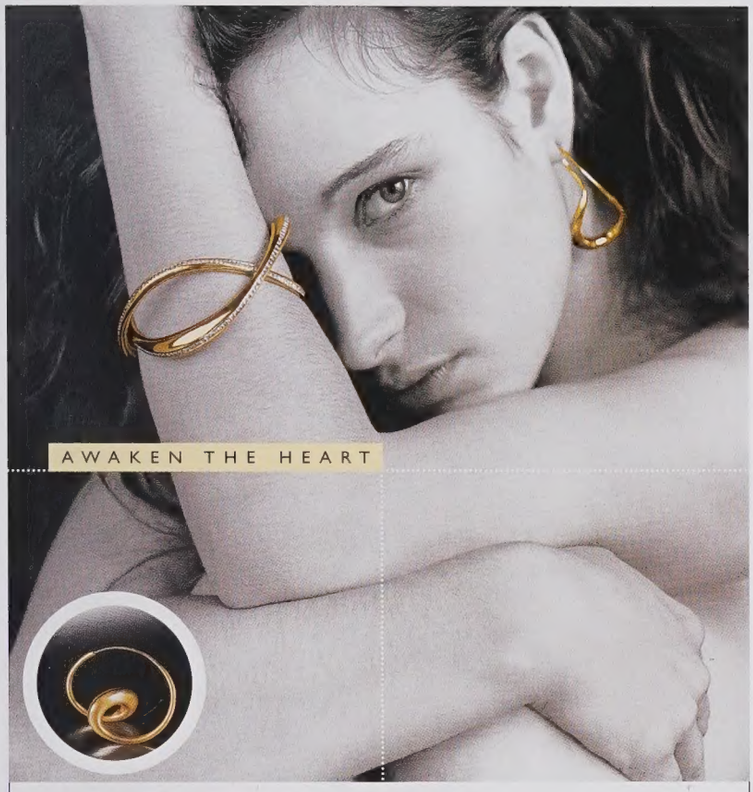

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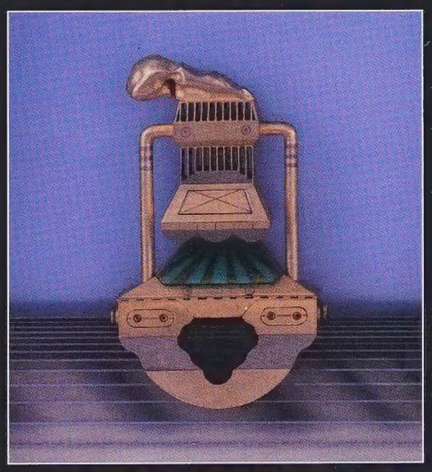

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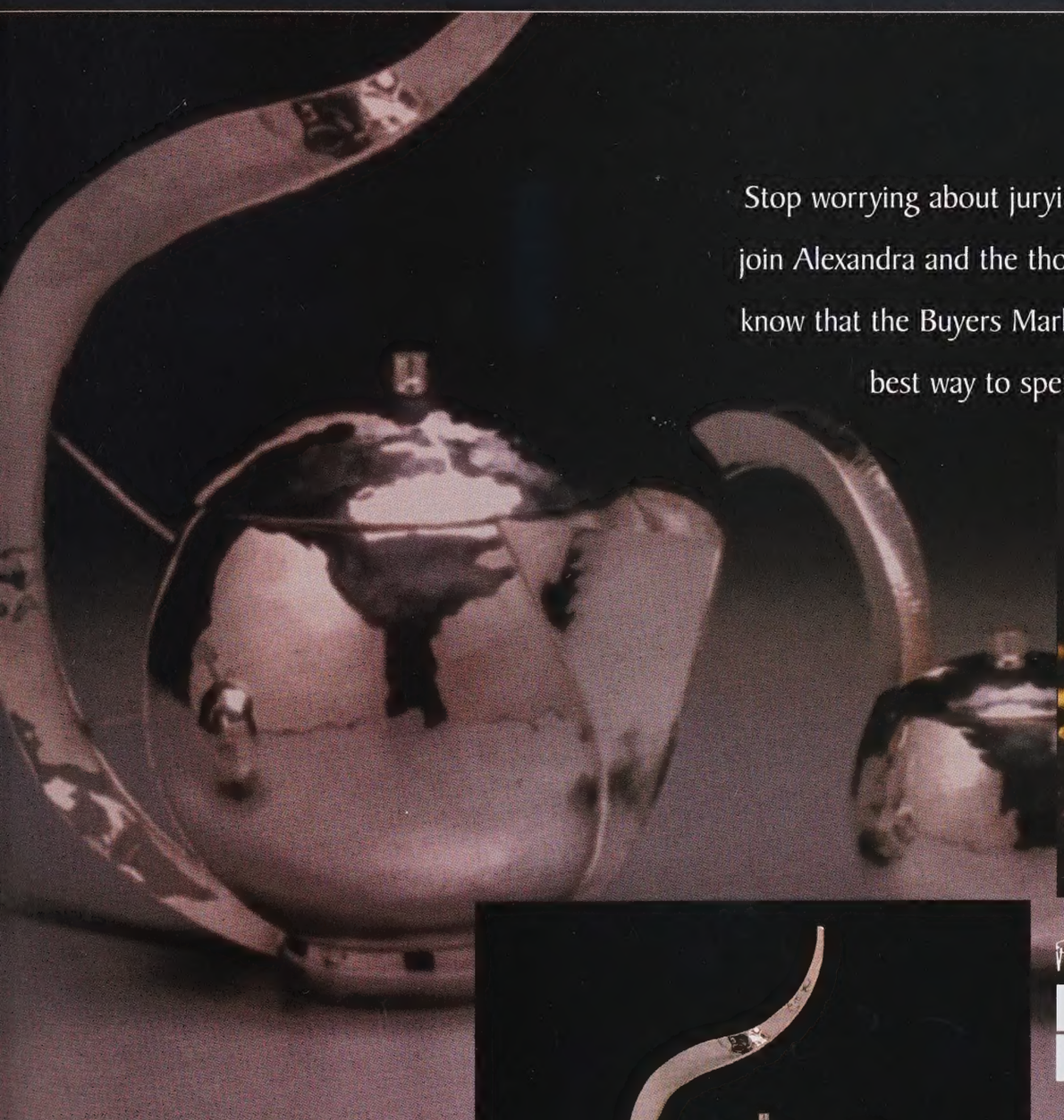

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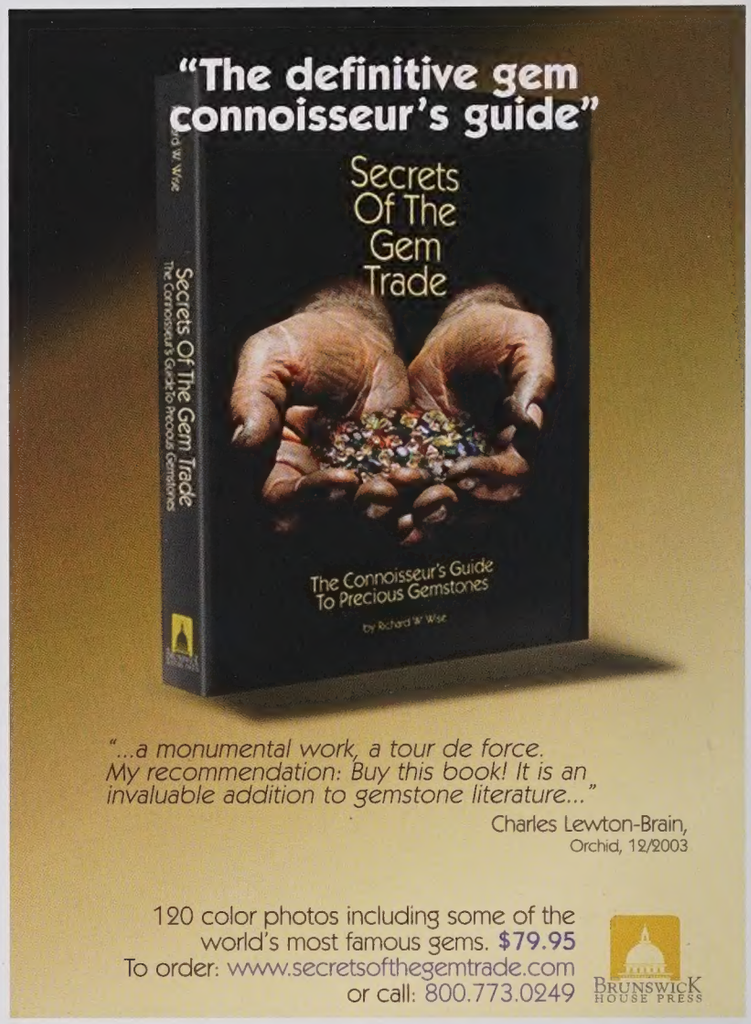
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The Connoisseur's Guide To Precious Gemstones
by Richard W. Wise

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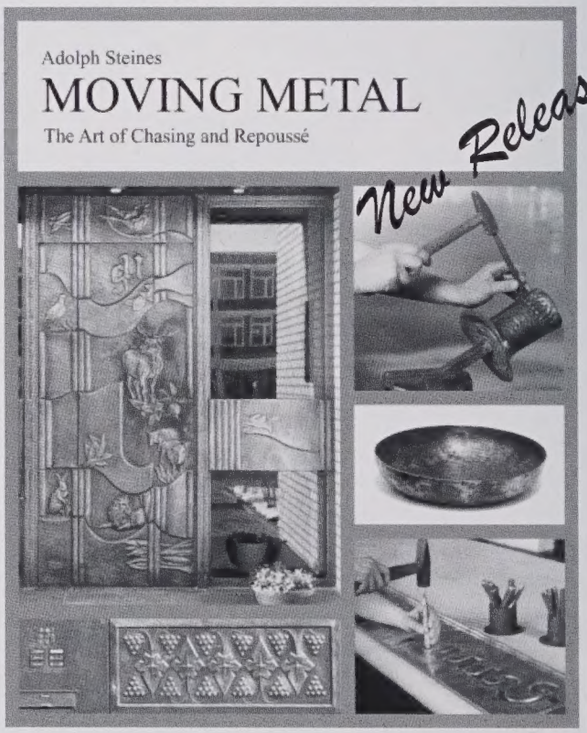

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Secrets of the Gem Trade: The Connoisseur's Guide to Precious Gemstones

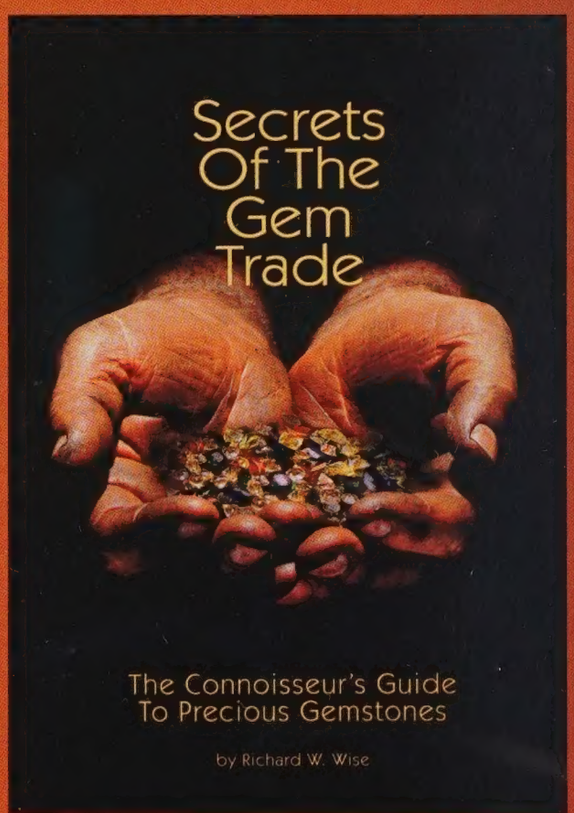
by Richard W. Wise

Brunswick House Press, Lenox, Massachusetts, 2003

by Linda Kaye-Moses

In the preface to *Secrets of the Gem Trade*, author Richard W. Wise states his intention to provide collectors with information about the gem trade, "a trade that has kept its secrets for thousands of years," and, further, to guide the collector toward becoming an expert in gem appreciation. It is a promise that Wise keeps.

The book is divided into two parts: *Part 1, Becoming a Connoisseur–Essentials*, covers the evaluative process for determining quality in gemstones; and *Part 2, Probes–A New List of Precious Gemstones*, selects as precious, and describes, specific gem types and applies the evaluative process to each type, all in the service of transforming the novice gem collector into a knowledgeable "aficionado."



In the course of furnishing his evaluative methodology, Wise frequently offers advice laced with an application of common sense decisions. For example, he encourages collectors to learn to trust their own eyes and not to depend solely on the selections of "veteran dealers," who are generally "deeply conservative." In addition to providing information on traditional gemstones, Wise's discussion of newly discovered gemstones broadens the collector's horizon. He advises the collector to learn to recognize the distinguishing qualities of gems (and it is the purpose of this book to train the collector in that recognition), and he suggests that the collector remember to trust intuition and personal preference, in addition to using his recommended procedure.

Since Wise's primary intention is to enable the collector of gemstones to reach an *informed* determination of quality/preciousness, his exploration includes: his methodology, historical considerations, a review of traditional gem appraisal procedures, his experiences as a gem buyer and dealer, and a rationale for the adoption of his method.

Wise includes an historical perspective of gemstones because the vagaries of what has constituted preciousness in gems has contributed to inconsistent criteria. Wise states, "The whole idea of preciousness is fluid," since the specifications of what constitutes preciousness in gems have varied from culture to culture, linked with religious implications, size of stones, and color of stones. He defines "preciousness," a definition that must necessarily form the basis of determining quality in gemstones, and contrasts what was precious historically with what may be considered precious now.

Also included is a brief discussion of the "semiprecious," a term, according to Wise, "as meaningless as the term *semi-pregnant* or *semi-deceased*." Wise contends that, "...*semi-precious* should translate as *buying opportunity*" and encourages

the reader to regard a semiprecious gem as if it were a precious gem that has not yet been declared precious.

Wise launches his discussion of current concepts of preciousness by declaring, "The innate beauty of the gemstone becomes central....In developing connoisseurship in gemstones, beauty has become the defining criterion." Wise insists that what has been lacking is a consistent, standardized, and objective methodology for the determination of gem beauty and, therefore, its preciousness.

The author suggests that the true appreciator of gemstones look at them without regard for the "verbal baggage," of provenance or pedigree, or even its apparent or actual rarity. Rather, the collector should just "look at the stone" with an educated eye. Wise supplies that education, providing a method for evaluating and appreciating gems. It is this method, combined with the collector's subjective reponse to the stone, that will assist the collector in the final determination of a stone's worth. It is the goal of Part 1 of the book to introduce and define that methodology.

This book's major contribution to the understanding of gem evaluation is made by the author's explication on "The Four C's–Color, Clarity, Cut and Crystal." These four criteria for judging the beauty and quality of gemstones are the lynchpins of Wise's system for determining gemstone preciousness. Wise indicates that an objective evaluation of a particular stone depends on a balance between all four C's, a balance that can be expressed as a measurable percentage. Wise discusses the differences between his approach and older systems, then carefully delineates the procedure for measuring each criterion. The methodology, though complicated, is approached expertly, explaining objective means for identifying desirable characteristics of gemstones. Wise applies his method to a discussion of the more common stone types (amethyst, topaz, sapphire, garnet, etc.) as well as stones that don't fit into an easy format (stars, cat's-eyes, colorless diamonds, natural fancy color diamonds, and pearls).

Consistent with the author's other goal, he includes revealing information about the potential pitfalls that may be encountered when purchasing gemstones, particularly the techniques that gem dealers use to present stones in order to make an inferior stone more appealing. Among these, Wise reveals, for example: using lighting conditions that optimize a stone's features and minimize its flaws (Wise also describes those lighting conditions that facilitate viewing stones accurately); selling mixed quality gems in parcels (Wise discourages purchasing stones this way); relying on lab "certificates" of quality ("laboratories certify gemstones, but unfortunately no one certifies laboratories").

The second part of the book is devoted to individual chapters on "the... gem varieties that [the author] believes should be included in any contemporary list of precious gemstones": alexandrite, amethyst, beryls, chalcedony, garnet, pearls, ruby, sapphire, opal, tourmaline, fancy color diamonds, lapis lazuli, and spinel. Each stone is described within the parameters of the criteria reviewed in *Part 1* of the book.

This book is liberally enriched with consistently clear diagrams and color-balanced photographs, all in support of the text. Many of the photographs (and anecdotes, as well) come from the author's archives of his own travels to find rare gemstones. The author provides intriguing footnotes, both historical and technical in nature, referring to the development of connoisseurship of gemstones and also to the nature of specific gems. These "asides" strengthen the main text, allowing the reader to go beyond a simple recitation of facts. The glossary, which equips the reader with an instant review of vocabulary, along with the bibliography and index, render the book an efficient manual for gemstone evaluation.

The language used, the easily assimilated information, the well-defined terminology, and the careful progression through the methodology all contribute to the success of this volume. *Secrets of the Gem Trade; The Connoisseur's Guide to Precious Gemstones* succeeds in its goals to provide the collector with a method for quantifying gemstone beauty and to provide a revealing view of the gem trade. At the same time, in this book devoted to delineating the measurable and observable aspects of gems, the author reminds the reader that, after completing an objective evaluation of a stone, a subjective appreciation of the stone's beauty is the *final* essential factor necessary for determining whether or not it is worthy of collection. ⧫

Linda Kaye-Moses is an exhibiting studio jeweler, teacher, curator, and freelance writer whose work has appeared in major shows and periodicals.

OPINION

On Justifying Art

by J. Fred Woell

For many years, I have struggled to find ways of conveying the meaning of art and its importance. I had come to believe that when critics and teachers talk about art they primarily only talk about what we see on the surface, the formal issues of design, composition, materials, technique, and craftsmanship. In my quest to develop significant ways to justify art, I wanted to go further to the invisible and emotional aspects of creative work. This society badly needs art, and I feel we must find ways of understanding why art is so important to our entire culture if we ever expect it to become a healing and nurturing force in our lives.

This nation is in its early adolescence in terms of cultural development. Our government is more focused on force than peace, justice, and the arts. A powerful example is our invasion of Iraq. Was there any real concern for the culture and arts of that country when we invaded it? When was the last time you heard a President of the United States mention the arts in his State of the Union address? How much does art really exist in our communities on a daily basis? Where in the U.S. Constitution do you find words that endow upon every man, woman and child the "right to arts" to insure their health and welfare in a just and free society? We who have been educated in colleges and universities over the past 50 years have no idea how to promote this aspect of the arts, because our education didn't include any study of the significance of art to the health of society and culture. We have not learned ways of expressing how important the arts are to nurturing and sensitizing us to humanity.

Art always seems to play second or third or fourth fiddle to everything else. Art is the last thing considered in the list of basic essentials that include food, clothing, and shelter; reading, writing and arithmetic. Accordingly, artists in this country are second-class citizens. We are losing the struggle to integrate art into the fabric of our society because we have yet to find the way of presenting a convincing case. If Pepsi and Coke can sell millions of bottles of their worthless products, then there certainly must be a way to sell people on the necessity of art. Art improves people's ability to be educated, to live healthier emotional lives, to feel self-esteem, and as a result to be physically healthier and happier human beings.

So how can art improve our lives? Let me begin with risk taking. We have come to define risks as financial gambles, or physical daring. According to David Viscott in his book *Risking*, however, we face others that are even more challenging. One of these is introspection: the time you take to be alone, really alone with yourself. It is at these moments, he explains, that we come to our greatest growth and our deepest realizations. It is at these moments, apart from the influences of others, that we can truly be who we are, truly find freedom and experience democracy.

We are a society dependent on group activity. We think group learning is the most efficient and economical way to educate. The end result is that we become dependent on everything external to keep us stable and running. The thought of not having someone else filling up our day with activities is troubling. It is in some ways emotionally traumatic and even deeply depressing. However, without stepping out alone and risking introspection, being alone, we cannot create.

Another great problem of this culture is that failure is

unacceptable. Success is everything. We artists, Viscott explains, are able to take risks, because we know failure. We fail constantly in our efforts to create our art. We understand that failure is important in order to ultimately succeed. More important, we accept that it is a major and necessary part of the process. This is part of our strength and our great contribution to society.

It is time to wake up to the fact that what we create contributes to our emotional health through our senses of sight, sound, and touch. All art (music, dance, fine arts, crafts, photography, poetry, and literature) is food for these senses. The arts make the world we live in visually stimulating and exciting. The arts connect us to ourselves and to nature. It is a critical lifeline between each of us that reaches across cultural boundaries and the advancing time clock we know as history. How little we would know about homo sapiens without art.

I remember a story about an incident in the life of the famous Japanese potter Hamada. Apparently, visitors to his home noticed it was full of pottery. Not just his own, but a huge collection of pottery of other potters. The guests were amazed to see so much pottery and asked him why he had so much of it. His reply was: "This is my food!" Think about that! Art as food! Food for the human spirit. Food that lifts the mind to levels of introspection. Food that nourishes our emotional needs and basic senses: things that are invisibly visible.

We all know that without the senses of sound, sight, and touch life would be much less rich and meaningful. What enriches these human senses more than any other thing are the arts. Yet, look at how low on the totem pole the arts rank in the lives of the general public in this society. How many people start their day with a cup of coffee out of a paper or Styrofoam cup compared to a handmade original ceramic cup? Yes, the Styrofoam cup may keep the coffee warm longer, but the handmade ceramic cup has a warmth of texture, form, intimacy, character, and spirit that is lacking in the disposable cups. The mere holding of a handmade object communicates an important message to ones' senses, a message that is missed by a majority of the public every day. The lack of original art in the lives of every man and woman is a significant problem. The arts nourish us and give us the necessities that nothing else can. It is important that we acknowledge this and find ways to communicate this to others.

Supporting the arts based upon the invisible nourishment they provide is certainly a challenge. It's hard for people to understand that the real significance of art is invisible. This is also our problem. We artists fail to convey the significance of the arts to others in a way they can understand. We need to take another approach. To get art into the mainstream of our society, we need to prove how necessary art is to our daily lives, our schools, and in our communities. We must get a vast majority of our society involved. Art should be seen and felt in everyone's homes, in the town squares, on buildings, in offices, in schools, in restaurants, in banks—not just in a few public buildings. I am tired of seeing "art" memorials that commemorate war and military actions with statues of men holding guns or riding horses. I want to see women holding children, people showing passion for others, as well as abstract art and sculpture giving color, form, texture, and life to our public environments!

J. Fred Woell
Democracy Speaks (brooch), 2003
mixed media: wood, copper, brass, steel, nickel, paper, plastic
2 1/4 x 3 x 3/8"

The composer John Cage learned from one of his students (a woman from India) that the purpose of music was "to sober and quiet the mind, rendering it susceptible to divine influences." He believed what we do opens us to life itself. It is our mission as artists to understand the importance of this feeding of our emotional side, the inside of art. The steps we take in this direction will certainly enrich our lives and will make art and life the same... or as John Cage has said: "wake up the very life we are living." ⧗

J. Fred Woell is a metalsmith, sculptor, PMC Guild instructor, and author who lives on Deer Isle, Maine.

STUDIO VISIT

Christina Smith

by Jennifer Cross Gans

Keeping a life in balance isn't easy, and for the studio artist it's a push-pull between dealing with the outside world and making time and space for creativity. California artist Christina Smith manages to do both, at the price of working a back-breaking schedule.

During the day, the friendly and outgoing Smith is an assistant professor at California State University, Fullerton. After more than 20 years in the academic salt mines, she's now on the tenure track, teaching beginning crafts in addition to undergraduate and graduate level metalsmithing

It's clear she is a versatile and dedicated teacher, helping her students through the basics, encouraging them to tackle big projects, and showing them many of the shortcuts to excellence she's learned in her successful metals career. She is also working hard to expand her department, while cultivating the newly formed metals club and pursuing internships and jobs for qualified students.

Christina Smith, 2004
Photo: Ellis Gans

above right
The artist's Fullerton, California studio
Photo: Ellis Gans

After work, she walks along a tree-lined street to her snug home, lavishly decorated with paintings bought, given, or traded from students, friends, and colleagues. Her studio is at the rear of the small yard, shaded by large lemon and orange trees. She's greeted by the family dog,

Patsy Montana (named for the first woman country singer to sell one million records), who pursues her and plays with the fallen lemons. It is here that her private, interior world begins.

Her studio, a former garage, is neatly but tightly packed, and well-ventilated with a writhing mass of pleated silvery ducts overhead. There is a large guillotine, which she uses to cut and construct heavy paper models of big projects, such as teapots. These are then deconstructed, digitally photographed, and manipulated at the computer station across the room.

Like most metalworkers, she is a tool-lover. In addition to the usual fabrication equipment, she has two rolling mills, a slip roller for cylinders and bracelets, and a Crystal Master lapping machine for flat-lapping hollow forms such as bracelets and teapot bottoms. She also has three lathes, one of which is new. "I do everything on it!" says Smith—including making her own nuts and bolts for cold connections, particularly on her teapots. Self-taught in machining, she makes all the parts for her charm bracelets and the findings for her brooches, including a newly designed and ingenious locking pin-stem of which she's currently proud.

Smith likes to work big. She opens a wide-drawer

cabinet and lets me try on a few pieces. Her bracelets, rings, and brooches are hefty, but wearable, provided you don't do the housework in them. Her teapots and tea services are not for the weak of wrist. They are fabricated from 14 and 16 gauge sterling, with solid stands cut from 1 gauge metal. Shearing this thick metal still causes her and her supplier some headaches; it's not easy to do without causing slight distortion.

Smith's holloware and jewelry are superb performance art. Each piece or set has a theme, frequently with a silhouetted figure in a square frame surrounded by everyday objects, just sufficiently out of scale to require detailed examination and evoke a feeling of slight unease, recognition, or déjà vu.

Why so many teapots—which are difficult and time-consuming to make? For Smith, they conjure memories of coziness, of growing up in a family where tea was important, and where she was taught to make and pour it by her mother and grandmother. Today, she makes sure her teapots are functional; some even have their own tea-infuser inside.

A consistent theme of her designs is a flat, heavily textured figure, almost cut from a photograph. As a fourth-generation Californian, her brain is hard-wired to strong cinematographic and comic book outlines. When you look carefully at the foreshortening, however, her figures impart a strong sense of movement and additional dimension. By contrast, their tools, accessories, and other objects are in carefully modeled 3-D. "If I sculpted the bodies I would lose the action I get in a photograph," Smith explains, adding "I want people to bring past experiences to the pieces. They are also my reactions to situations I have been in." Many of these reflect the ordinary joys and sorrows of family life, our struggle for our own sense of place, and the private angst we all experience from time to time. Many of the little people are stuck in a box-like frame, coming, going, or just hanging. With their arms raised in despair, confusion, or exuberance, they look as though life is giving them a hard time.

Smith's art reflects the uneasy temper of our generation. It resonates with her collectors, galleries, and several museums, including the Los Angeles County Museum, which recently purchased and displayed her tea service *Too Many Tools*. In the last four years alone Smith has been in 17 group shows, ranging from SOFA to the Cheongju Exhibition Hall in Seoul, Korea. Her work has also appeared in several magazines and has been featured on the covers of *Metalsmith* and *Ornament*.

Too Many Tools (tea service), 2002
sterling silver
18 x 14 x 14"
Photo: Anthony Cunha

To date, her work has mostly avoided strong political statements. In the future this may change, depending on the outcome of the presidential election, and on how she acts out her role as the family liberal. It's also possible she will tackle more women's issues, such as her resentment of "fat old men debating abortion." Meanwhile, she continues to work long days at school, and long evenings and weekends in her studio, squeezing in a little time to have fun playing with Patsy Montana, or with her two nieces and nephews, and fly fishing. Is she a workaholic? Undoubtedly! But as she says "I so much enjoy what I do. It's my life." ⧗

Jennifer Cross Gans is a studio artist and writer in San Francisco.

He Always Planned to Leave (brooch), 2004
sterling silver
4 x 3 x 1"
Photo: Anthony Cunha

VIEW

Classical Revival

by Marjorie Simon

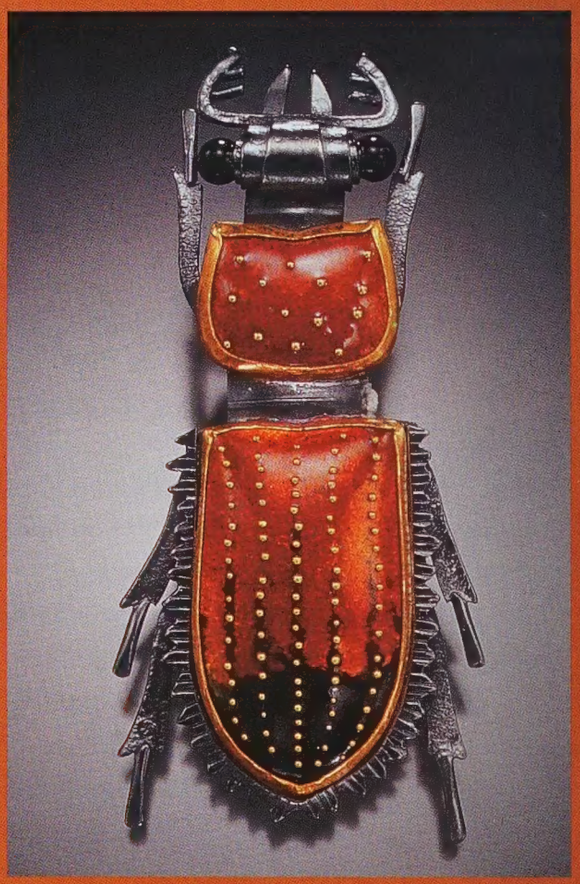
"Who, then, will dare say that there is nothing left for us but to copy the...Honeysuckle of the Greeks or the Acanthus of the Romans, that this alone can produce art?"[1]

The classics never go out of style.

Classicism as a design principle has come to mean simplicity, proportion, restraint, and symmetry, or admiration and imitation of these principles. It is often contrasted with romanticism, and connotes a kind of conservatism inherent in looking backward. Classical jewelry is usually made of gold, and based on Etruscan, Greek, and Roman designs or techniques.

Perhaps the greatest debt in classical jewelry design is owed the Etruscans, native Italians living in the sixth to fifth centuries BCE in what is now Tuscany. By the third century BCE, they had been absorbed by the Roman Empire, which in turn disseminated a "universal Hellenistic Greek style."[2] But the Golden Age of Greece was itself preceded by the great civilizations of the East, specifically, of the city-state of Ur (Babylonia, now Iraq) as far back as 3500 BCE. Gold hair ornaments in floral motifs and gold chains with gemstone beads formed the basis of designs that migrated increasingly westward.

Direct reference to classical Greek and Roman design first surfaced 1000 years after the fall of the Roman Empire, during the European Renaissance—especially in the return to Etruscan-style gold granulation—and then again in the eighteenth century following the discoveries of Pompeii and Herculaneum. Hence even the romanticism of Victorian jewelry has its roots in classical design.



right
Amy Roper Lyons
Bess Beetle Brooch
sterling silver, 22k gold, vitreous enamel, black onyx
3 x 1 1/4"

below
Lydia Gerbig-Fast
In My Lover's Garden (tiara with removable necklace), 2003
sterling silver, vitreous enamel on fine silver with etched copper, antique glass beads, pearls, gemstone beads
11 1/2 x 2 3/4 x 1"
Photo: Dean Powell

The following brief glance barely hints at the sizable subculture of goldsmithing still involved in reinterpreting Egyptian, Greek, and Roman designs, and teaching the methods of achieving them. Classical goldsmithing refers to incorporating the techniques of antiquity: chasing and repoussé, granulation, filigree, lost-wax casting, engraving, and stone carving. Themes range from Egyptian insects (reinterpreted in the age of Art Nouveau by René Lalique), to homage to Etruscan granulation; a Celtic torque from the first century BCE could have been

made by twentieth-century designer David Yurman. But the best work seeks not to recreate exact pieces from antiquity but to reference the classical techniques and design motifs. Tom Herman carves gemstones and builds stately, intimate brooches that look to Greek architecture as well as jewelry, while reinterpreting the Renaissance notion of creating the illusion of depth on a flat plane.

Modern practitioners enjoy the challenge of reproducing ancient masterpieces and/or updating them, often creating their own tools, jigs, and forms as they imagine ancient smiths to have done. Goldsmiths Bikakis and Johns were both trained at Jewelry Arts Institute. Myron Bikakis first earned a doctorate in Classics and Archaeology, and Mark Johns has a background in literature. Their eclectic approach is best characterized by a creamy 22k gold chain that is "a quadruple loop-in-loop, done throughout antiquity. [The] granulation is inspired by the Etruscans, but the pin clipping to the end of the chains [is] borrowed from Egyptian necklaces."

Another duo, Mary Hughes and Caro-Gray Bosca, use both ancient designs and ancient materials to create their gold jewelry. Their sources include Afghani coins (2000 BCE) and a pre-Columbian bell (1500 BCE) amidst a mixture of Old and New World references. Unlike some narrative jewelers who use antique coins or objects of non-European origin for their formal or material properties, Hughes and Bosca directly incorporate the original culture and reinterpret it, again, mostly in gold. Notable is a Roman-style necklace with gemstones and gold connections. They know, as goldsmiths have known for 5000 years, that high carat gold marries well with lapis lazuli, carnelian, and emeralds—classic colors of classic stones.

Others make more oblique attribution. Amy Roper Lyons doesn't consciously recreate Egyptian designs, but her representational enameled insects recall the scarab beetles and dragonflies of ancient Egypt, as well as the nature themes reinterpreted in the late nineteenth century by Lalique and other French fin-de-siècle designers.

Tiaras are adornments with limited and ritualized use nowadays, but even they have not entirely disappeared. Their floral and foliate forms must surely originate with garlanded maidens welcoming in the spring season. They date at least to dynastic Egypt and enjoyed a European renaissance during the nineteenth century. Lydia Gerbig-Fast recalls the floral themes and beaten gold leaves of Egyptian diadems with vitreous enamel and pearls.

In light of postmodern sensitivity to the contributions of non-Western cultures, it might be tempting to minimize our debt, in the words of Edgar Allan Poe, to "the glory that was Greece, and the grandeur that was Rome." By no means all of the picture, they remain a large part of our notions of beauty and ornamentation. ⧗

clockwise from top left
Hughes-Bosca
Removable Pendant, 1997
18k yellow gold, oxblood coral, Chinese freshwater pearls, ancient Roman coin
2 x 2 x 1/2"

Tom Herman
Brooch, 1999
18k gold, black dendritic agate, black onyx, pearls
2 3/4 x 2 1/2"
Photo: Ralph Gabriner

Bikakis & Johns
Pendant, 2003
22k gold, hand carved aquamarine
2 1/8 x 1/2"
Photo: Myron Bikakis

Marjorie Simon is a metalsmith and writer based in New Jersey.

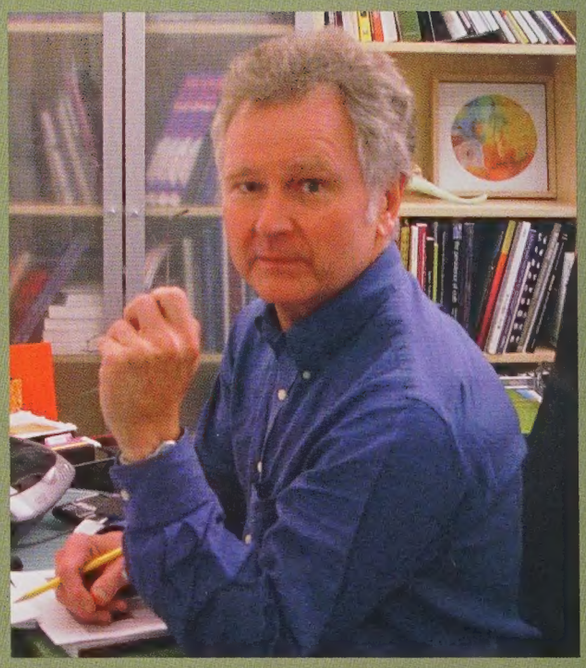
1 Owen Jones, *The Grammar of Ornament* (Barnes and Noble, 1997, reprinted from 1910), 251.
2 Hugh Tait, ed., *Seven Thousand Years of Jewellery* (London: Trustees of the British Museum, 1986), 63.

INTERVIEW

David Revere McFadden

by Suzanne Ramljak

For over three decades David Revere McFadden has staunchly promoted the cultural value of decorative arts. He has carried on this campaign while holding such positions as Curator of Decorative Arts at the Minneapolis Institute of Arts and at the Cooper-Hewitt, National Design Museum, Smithsonian Institution. He is now Chief Curator and Vice President for Programs and Collections at the Museum of Arts & Design (formerly American Craft Museum) in New York, which will relocate to a new facility with expanded galleries and a jewelry study center in 2007. McFadden's advocacy of material culture has not gone unrecognized; his many honors include Knight, First Class, of the Order of Finland; Chevalier de l'Ordre des Arts et des Lettres of the Republic of France; and he is the three-time recipient of the Presidential Design Award for Excellence.



David Revere McFadden, 2004
Photo: Jessica Klein

Suzanne Ramljak: There was considerable uproar over the museum's name change from American Craft Museum to Museum of Arts & Design (MAD), and I wanted to clarify the rational behind this change. You've talked about decorative arts and crafts as suffering from a pretty-but-dumb reputation; like the bimbo of the art world. With that in mind, the choice to ditch the word "craft" is equivalent to dumping your blond girlfriend because blonds have a reputation of being ditzy, rather than redeeming her and proving that she's smart. Why didn't the museum choose to fight and defend the term rather than abandon it altogether?

David Revere McFadden: We attempted to do that for five years; we tried to reinterpret that word. Our exhibition *Defining Craft* in 2000 was a sincere effort to deal purposefully with this word and show that it is complex and problematic because it has so many meanings to so many different audiences. With the name change, we were not throwing out crafts at all. It is just that the term was too narrow for what many of our artists were doing. While craftsmanship is key to everything we collect and exhibit, the term "craft" does not describe the full nature and range of creative activity today, from making traditional functional objects to highly conceptual works of art. We also found that there was no cultural infrastructure. Almost no major museum has a department of craft; they have departments of design, decorative arts, or "arts" plural—like Western European arts—but rarely a craft department. There is also a shortage of critical literature or vocabulary that deals specifically with craft, which seems to diminish its

significance in the mainstream art world. But if you approach these objects from the vocabulary and critical stance that exists for art and design in general, then you can begin to talk about them.

SR: So you think the word was no longer useful...

DRM: It was misleading. Especially when it was used as a noun. That was the problem. Craft is not a thing. You can't pick it up. You can't hold it in your hand. It is not a product. It is a practice; it is a discipline.

SR: In some of the museum's literature, you still make distinctions between the fields of craft, decorative art, and design. Since these other terms are also problematic, why do you perpetuate these categories?

DRM: The English language does not have a word that adequately describes our field today: creative work based on engagement with materials and techniques that occurs in the interstices between the old categories of art, craft, and design. I've jokingly said that we should be called the "Museum of Good Stuff to Look At," but it is just not realistic. And it is very important that people know that MAD is not trying to blur the edges of the fields. It is the artists themselves who are doing it; they are really moving things forward and have broken many of those rules, and eroded those boundaries. We are responding to this significant development. What is exciting about this time and this post-disciplinary movement is that it embraces an entire range of work, from artists working in the traditional mediums of clay, glass, wood, fiber, and metal, to people in architecture, fashion, and product design to people who are doing painting and sculpture. We are also looking at "crossover" artists who move between mediums and, in our new building, will be able to explore the relationships between our field and performance art, literature, and music. By the way, they all have their own "craft," which guides the making of their "art."

SR: What do you see as the promised land—that one day all makers and objects will be united under one banner?

DRM: There is no promised land per se. In my own mind I have the metaphor of the Art Nouveau movement, between 1880 and 1910. There was an incredible synergy between all the arts then—dance, theater, architecture, interior design, furniture, jewelry, costume and dress—it was a deeply ingrained concept of this movement that the arts essentially had the same value and levels of creativity. Someone like Van de Velde could work in multiple mediums, and it helped to elevate all of the mediums he transformed. And the roles assumed by artists are equally diverse. We know that Emile Gallé did not blow all of the glass that bears his name. He was the head of a studio, like Tiffany, and played the crucial role of aesthetic editor. Artists have often done the same thing throughout the centuries, using their studio assistants, apprentices, or paid staff to carry out their projects. These artists did not necessarily have to physically make everything with their own hands, but they were certainly invested in what that object meant.

SR: That raises the question of the importance of the handmade. Craft and the handmade used to be synonymous. I know you are not wedded to this as an essential element of a craft object.

DRM: What does handmade really mean? Does it mean that you only use your hands? If you are sitting at a loom, you are using a machine. Or if you use a potter's wheel—that is a machine. Should you coil build all of your pots like Native American potters and not enlist any technology? It would be foolish to go down that route in all mediums. So handmade is a relative term depending on the context in which it is used. Tiffany glass and lamps were handmade, although Tiffany's own hands certainly never touched them all in the process. If you look back on the history of decorative arts there has always been this division of labor. You can go back to a fifth-century BCE Greek pottery workshop and find there are some people who are making the forms, some people who are making handles, some of them sticking them together with slip, others painting the ground, and others painting figures. It is a romantic and unrealistic idea that only one person who touches an object throughout the entire process of its making can qualify as an artist.

SR: If you think the hand, or human touch, is not important then what are the questions one should ask in relation to a crafted or designed object?

DRM: I would certainly ask the question: Who made it—whether an individual or a team—and then, why did this person make this object? When you begin pondering the *why*, not only who, what and how, then you have some real issues and you begin to get into the meaning of those objects. That is what interests me. I want to talk about the cultural, political, social, and aesthetic significance of things.

SR: How would you define your own personal mission? If you could have everyone learn just one thing, or if you could shout something from the mountaintops, what would it be?

DRM: It is always an interesting challenge to distill what you are thinking or doing down to its essence. I would

Rendering of the future jewelry gallery in the Museum of Arts & Design at Two Columbus Circle, New York
Photo: Allied Works Architecture

have to go back to a very trite statement, and that is "objects speak." They have a voice and that voice is made up of a lot of threads of meaning—the maker, the material, the owner, how it was purchased, traded, exhibited. Objects are phenomenal sponges; they just keep absorbing more and more meaning over time. Then when you consider historical objects that have been passed down for generations, centuries or millennia, the significance is truly staggering. There is a life in objects. And we invest objects with a lot of meaning when we attend to them, but you have to look carefully. So the one thing I'd say is to look and listen carefully, because those objects have something to say to you.

SR: On a basic level why do you think objects are so important in our lives? Why do we need them other than for obvious practical purposes? Have you developed a theory of object relations?

DRM: I don't have a unified theory of objects, and I wish there was one. Again, it comes back to this idea that objects are rarely mute. There is something that we bring to the encounter that allows a conversation to occur between a human and an object, even in a mundane task like sticking a piece of paper into a printer. You've done something with that object and that object has done something with you.

Also, our self-consciousness puts us in a very interesting position vis-à-vis our daily existence. I like the idea that we are all living in a theater of daily life. The props that we have around us—for practical, emotional, spiritual, or intellectual reasons—whatever those props are, they become an equivalent of our own narrative as we write it. Objects end up being very personal and a way to describe ourselves to others. Clothing, furnishing, and jewelry all add to our stage presence.

SR: When do you know you are in the presence of a remarkable object? What are your own criteria for value or impact?

DRM: That is really a tough question. You go into a gallery and what is it about one object out of 20 that draws you to it first? I wish there were a way to intellectually encapsulate it, but it is a gut reaction. It is also interesting to go into a museum or gallery and find a piece that you really dislike and to figure out why this object did not speak to you. It becomes a revealing dialogue you can have with yourself about how you see and why you are drawn to certain things.

I do appreciate it when the maker knows their field and its history very well. It shows in the work, and the work is generally much better and more meaningful because they have that embedded history in their own mind.

SR: Let's turn our attention to jewelry. What are your plans for the jewelry center in the museum's new Columbus Circle home, when it opens in 2007?

DRM: It will be called the Center for the Study of Jewelry. In the new facility we plan to have our jewelry collections entirely accessible, and we are currently

designing a storage and viewing system with its own internal security. There will also be a really good display space and we'll have a lively exhibition program with both thematic and monographic shows. We are purposely keeping the definition of jewelry very open because I would like to move further afield in our collecting plans. We've never really collected costume jewelry, for example, and I think there is a whole world out there where costume jewelry intersects with popular culture, new materials, and innovative design, not at all unlike so-called art jewelry. People like Miriam Haskell in the 1940s were doing extraordinary things with humble materials, whether it be glass, or beads, or metal. A lot of interesting designers have worked for the costume jewelry industry in conjunction with fashion and the parallel is very interesting. We want to establish as many links between jewelry and other aspects of the world as possible. Fashion is definitely one. History of art is another, along with the history of technology and materials. Then there is this whole anthropological dimension of why jewelry is what it is, why we wear the forms we wear, how it relates to our bodies and what it says. In addition, there will be a terminal and database, which will tie into our bigger plan of having a museum-wide database with pods in different places in the building. And we are working on this master plan to have a visual library of techniques available. So if someone wants to know how cloisonné is done, rather than just reading about it, they will be able to watch a video clip showing the process.

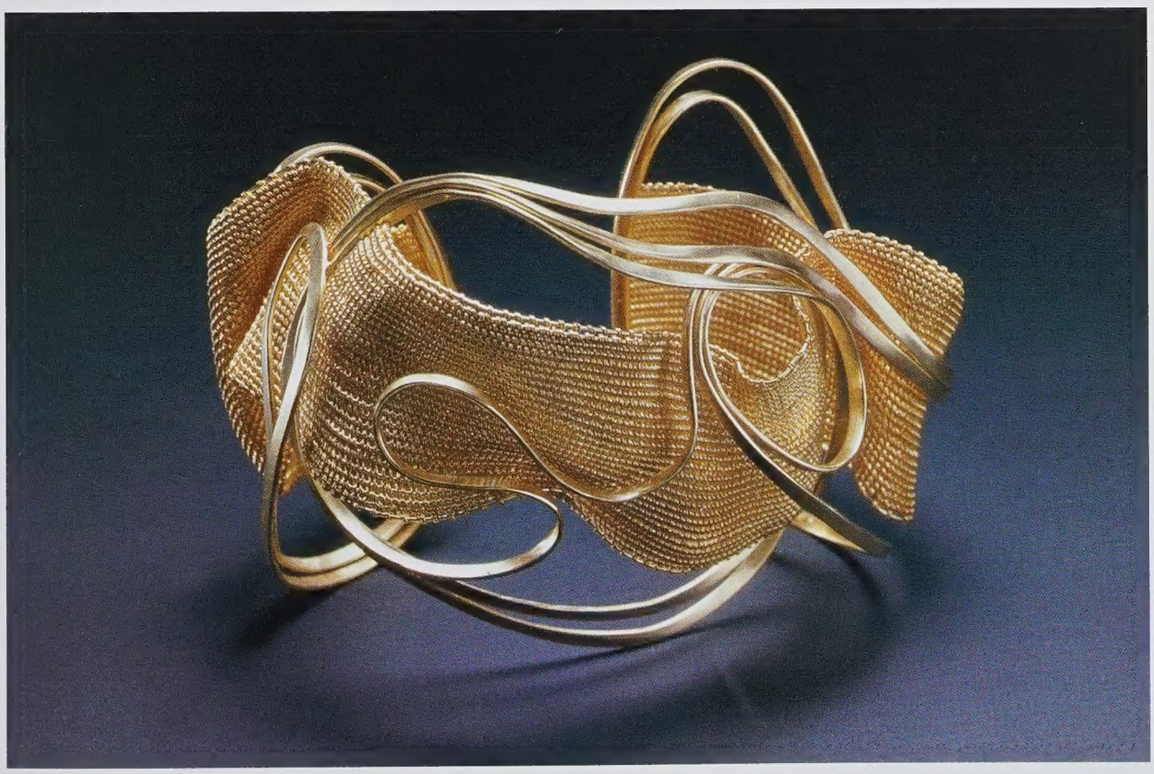
SR: Over the years, I've been picking up clues that you might be a closet gemologist and jewelry connoisseur. Are gems and jewelry indeed a sub-specialty of yours?

DRM: Even before I knew what art history was I wanted to be a biologist, paleontologist, or geologist. I passionately collected rocks. Plus I have always been seduced by color, so gemstones thrill me. I just love looking at them. As I got older, I began thinking about the theoretical ideas that may be embedded in the way gemstones are handled. I am currently working on this theory, which may turn out to be totally hogwash, about why people shifted from using cabochons to faceted stones in the late medieval period and the early Renaissance. I am not going to tell you why right now, but it is an interesting theory about the spiritual meaning of jewelry and how it interacts with light.

SR: What makes jewelry so engaging and compelling for you?

DRM: It is something that is so personal; it is a bridge between the inner you and what you want to show to the world. It is literally a badge or signal you wear saying this is who I am, this is what matters to me. And we have a very interesting hierarchy of values in jewelry. That is one of the reasons that non-precious materials have gone to the top of the heap in many respects. Because the value is not in the material, it is in the message that the work conveys. I believe that this holds true for all the mediums and all art forms. We are in the fortunate position to enjoy the magical transformations that artists achieve. ⧗

Suzanne Ramljak is editor of *Metalsmith*.



Mary Lee Hu
Bracelet #62, 2002
18k and 22k gold
3 1/2 x 2 1/2 x 2 3/4"
Collection Museum of Arts & Design, New York
Photo: R. Goodbody

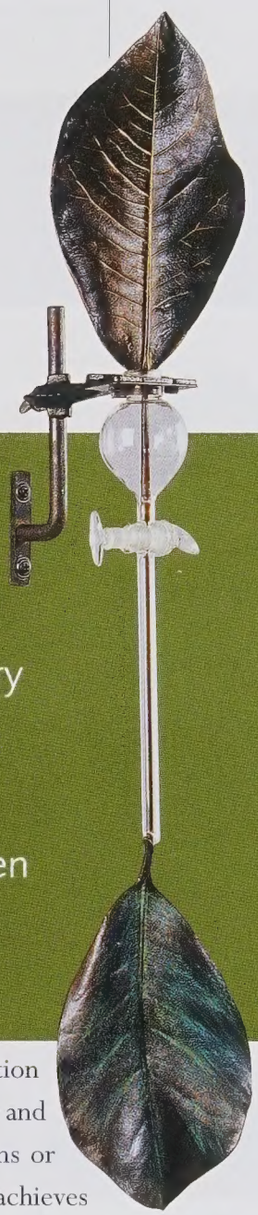
Cambium, 2003
bronze, brass, glass
13 x 8 x 8"
Photo: Christopher Zaleski

Beverly Penn

Shadows of the Absolute

by Glen R. Brown

The works of Texas sculptor Beverly Penn stage a mingling of disparate elements, reflecting the kind of interaction and eventual equilibrium that occurs along borders of all sorts. Balance is the artist's consistent goal, and arbitration her primary mode of composition. Most of her works suggest the spaces in which nature and human design negotiate a mutual existence along an indistinct boundary. In other works, disparities between cultures are brought into tentative alignment along a similarly nebulous borderline. The result is a fragile peace.



Separatory Globe 60 ML, from "Graft Series," 2000
bronze, glass, steel
24 x 6 x 9"
Photo: Paul Bardagjy

Penn seems sanguine about the resolution of conflicting aims, but an obvious abstraction poignantly situates her optimism on the level of the ideal. She implicitly seeks to hold static and inviolate the moment of synthesis resulting from her arbitration between opposing systems or forces; her works can be said to represent utopian aspirations. The equilibrium she achieves ultimately seems as vulnerable as the glass components that she incorporates into many of her compositions. As a consequence, her works are tinged with the melancholy typical of beautiful dreams. They seem to hint at something intensely desirable but not quite sustainable in actual existence: an elusive paradisiacal state.

It is no coincidence that Penn's works reflect the longing for balance, impression of timelessness, and the deep nostalgia for unattainable and implicitly lost worlds that characterizes all art of the neoclassical tradition. Italy—as a locus of antiquity and a symbol of the Golden Age and its fabled harmony between nature and human beings—has haunted her thoughts for more than a decade. While on a 1989-90 Fulbright Grant devoted to producing jewelry and lecturing on American metalsmithing at the Escola Massana in Barcelona, Penn made a memorable trip to Italy in order to research historical architecture. The influence of this trip is most evident in the incorporation of Roman arches, capitals, and cornices into her fantasized arcades and columned halls. Yet even without these ancient architectural forms her work would present the unmistakable character of a classical idealism. Sometimes this assumes the solemn and severe mien of Poussin's Dorian mode, but more commonly it generates the pathos of a Claude Lorraine landscape, with pale ruins reflecting the golden light of a fleeting Mediterranean sunset. Penn's works reconcile nature with a human vision of perfection but only at the cost of a certain detachment, an intangibility.

The elements of her works may be real enough to walk among but their slender physicality is clearly of lesser importance than their ideal existence, their impression on the mind as realms of almost absolute harmony.

...she combined hundreds of molded parts—the larger pieces produced by a foundry and the smaller root tips centrifugally cast in the studio—to impose upon natural forms a plan of her own.

Architectural Fragments, 2000
steel
dimensions variable
Photo: Gary Retherford

The principal problem set for a classical idealist art—the rendering of material form in analogy to the perfect, unchanging, and universal state of an unseen sphere—is obliquely suggested by Penn's 2000 wall-mounted bronze sculpture *Penumbra*. This wispy, spidery form began with 43 molds taken from the root structure of a neighbor's tree, which was ripped from the ground after it desiccated and died during a spell of dry weather. As the title suggests, the sculpture was conceived as a reflection on the shadowy perceptions we normally have of roots as analogues of branches, the more visible extremities of trees. If Penn had simply cast the roots without modification, the sculpture could have been described as naturalistic, a faithful representation of material fact. Instead, she combined hundreds of molded parts—the larger pieces produced by a foundry and the smaller root tips centrifugally cast in the studio—to impose upon natural forms a plan of her own. The difference is subtle enough that the viewer is unlikely to recognize Penn's intervention, but the result is nevertheless a form that only resembles nature. *Penumbra* is a balance of natural caprice and human design, an image of nature perfectly disposed to meld with the mind. Its analogy to the commonly visible world on the one hand and its associations with an ordinarily unseen and more perfectly imagined state on the other, place it clearly on the level of the ideal.

The vulnerability of this idealized image, the fragility of the perfect harmony between nature and human will, is emphasized in the wall-mounted sculptures of Penn's "Graft Series" produced the same year. In their combination of heavy cast-bronze magnolia leaves and delicate laboratory glass, these sculptures suggest a precarious balance of contraries. The organic and the artificial are perhaps the most obvious of these. One cannot help but think, in looking at *T-Bore* or *Separatory Globe 60 ML*, of syntheses of nature and technology in practices such as hydroponics, in which the human need for plant energy has its complement in the plant's acquired need of human care. More subtle is the impression of uniformity—a non-hierarchical, non-linear continuity—that Penn seeks between disparate moments in time. Magnolias have their origins in the Triassic mists, and, as Penn knows from experience, their leathery leaves are especially resistant to decay. The laboratory glass, which as a type symbolizes progress—the advance of science toward a future, more perfect world—is in fact antiquated, the salvage of an updated research facility. The mingling of these suggestions of past, present, and future in a balanced formula seems to elevate the sculptures of the "Graft Series" above the common workings of time, to suspend them in a space beyond its influence. At the same time, they are clearly delicate structures, and therefore vulnerable to the perturbations of ordinary existence.

Antithetical to this impression of timelessness and fragility is Penn's multipartite sculpture *Architectural Fragments* (2000), which suggests both durability and the slow but persistent action of time in negating it. Consisting of nine massive steel cross-sections of classical molding that were constructed in the manner of hollow jewelry—some entirely boxlike, others lacking backs—the set has been exhibited in several different arrangements on the floor. Penn's favorite is a configuration that, in aligning the fragments in an orderly file, creates the impression of a row of half-buried tombstones in a neglected

Penumbra, 2000
bronze
5 x 5 x 2'
Photo: Christopher Zaleski

Twelve Months Time (Nandina), 2004
glass, bronze, brass, steel, silver, nickel, rubber
36 x 12 x 6"
Photo: Christopher Zaleski

churchyard. Concentrating on the relationship between human constructions designed to last the ages and the forces of nature that have eternity to reduce them to dust, Penn finished the surfaces of her ersatz architectural forms with a patina of copper sulphate. Dipping a botanical-patterned lace into this solution and laying it over the steel surfaces overnight to promote a raised pattern of rusting, she imparted to the forms a feeling of a slow smothering in organic matter: vines creeping over the dark and heavy shapes and tiny roots relentlessly forcing entry to any minute crack or indentation. With their surfaces stabilized, the steel forms are in no danger of any further decay, and in this respect they are consistent with other products of abstraction in Penn's work; they are images of conflicting forces in a momentary harmony.

In deliberately leaving open the backs of some of her *Architectural Fragments*, Penn assured a visual concentration on contours rather than masses. Her purpose was to stress the principles of architectural design, most obvious in linear diagrams that underlie actual physical forms. Systems, not objects, are the true protagonists reconciled in her harmonious compositions. The manner of subsequent incorporation of architectural elements into her work leaves little doubt that she is less interested in individual instances of construction than in the principles of architectonics as part of a human force for shaping the world. Against rational systems of design, nature is a persistent counterforce that can be enticed into temporary cooperation but never definitively subdued. In the punningly titled *Arcadia* (2002)—a linear-steel blind arcade that frames an idyllic vision in the barest of terms—Penn suggests a negotiation between a rational program for dividing space and an organic propensity to fill that same space non-rationally. The cast-bronze magnolia leaves, set with pegs, seem to have penetrated not only the wall itself but the imaginary vertical plane between the piers. Alternately, this imaginary plane could be construed as having sliced through the randomness of nature. In this intersection of human motives and the organic process of growth, Penn achieves an

ephemeral equilibrium.

Although concerned that extending her allusive architecture out from the wall might make it too literal to serve effectively as the symbol of a human system for organizing space, Penn clearly recognized that the near two-dimensionality of *Arcadia*, its graceful linearity, its geometric patterning, and its repetition of botanical motifs gave it a decorative quality that she was not seeking. As a consequence, her next major work, *The Edge of Paradise* (2002), insinuated itself into the viewer's space as a tangible network of contours, a skeletal configuration of classical fluted columns and invisible groin vaults that gave the impression of an architect's perspectival drawing rendered full scale in three dimensions. Penn's half of a collaborative project for which she and fellow artist Jill Bedgood received a joint Rockefeller Foundation Study Center Fellowship to travel to Bellagio, Italy, *The Edge of Paradise* unites modern construction materials with ancient architectural design and white Hydrocal casts of fragmentary cornices, volutes, and other classical forms. Within this unusual structure, past, present, and future seem momentarily to merge, as in the strange emptiness of a De Chirico painting where ancient sculpture and blank facades meet the steel and steam of a locomotive, or a Delvaux mindscape in which modern bowler hat passes Elysian nude on a somnambulist's stroll through moonlit ruins.

Specimen, from "Large Glass Dome Cylinder Series," 2002
bronze, brass, glass
18 x 5"
Photo: Heriard Cimino Gallery

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These comparisons are not gratuitous, since Penn's works clearly hinge on the psychology of nostalgia and the dream of a lost classical equilibrium. Intangible desire orients *The Edge of Paradise*—the title of which is in the nature of a clue—toward the structure of a maze from which exit is implicitly an entrance to someplace else. Walking among the columns and attempting to decipher the strange configurations of laboratory glass, gleaming electrical conduit, and pairs of white cherub wings that burgeon from the slender columns is something like confronting the sphinx. One senses that the answer to Penn's riddle is a lesson as well as a password. Perhaps a hint can be gleaned from the small cast hands that are interspersed with other disparate elements in the enigmatic space. Inspired by a nineteenth-century encyclopedia in which the actions of natural forces were illustrated by small grasping and gesticulating hands, these sculptural casts are the traces of energies abstracted on a timeless plane. Within the tentative halls of *The Edge of Paradise* the

Arcadia, 2002
bronze, steel
9 x 28 x 1'
Photo: Heriard Cimino Gallery

The Edge of Paradise, 2002
height 9'
video, steel, bronze, brass, Hydrocal, laboratory glass, soil samples, botanical samples, asphalt, vinegar, olive oil, graphite, yellow ochre, latex
Photo: Paul Bardagjy

winds seem present but still and the action of gravity appears momentarily suspended. As harmonious as the space has been rendered, however, it cannot be mistaken for paradise itself. The undisguised clamps with which it is temporarily held together betray its fundamental links to time and transformation.

As an environment, an enclosed and controlled space in which the viewer is invited to wander, *The Edge of Paradise* is connected to a new series of jewelry that Penn began producing in 2003. This most recent group of rings provides a smaller architectural counterpart to that earlier work. Jewelry, in fact, has never been separated in Penn's mind from any other constructed forms that might surround the body. A more specific conceptual connection of the rings to *The Edge of Paradise*, however, has to do with their implicit function as orienting devices, tools for navigating unfamiliar spaces. Consisting of two parts, the ring proper and a separate disk that can be worn either between finger and bezel or suspended on a chain as a pendant, the jewelry seems more accouterment than ornament. Its purpose is implied by the etched, rune-like markings on the face of the first of the 18k gold rings. These marks, though unreadable, suggest points on the dial of a compass. The larger, darkly patinated sterling silver disk revolves freely beneath this dial when worn on the hand, presumably to permit readings for triangulation or some other process of calculating one's location. The disk bears the unmistakable etched image of a map, although the territory to which it refers is strange. Its origin, in fact, is in the composite topography of a medieval German map that reconstructs the ancient world according to Ptolemy, Herodotus, and others who sought to bring the immensity of nature under rational control.

This impulse seems never far from the surface of Penn's work. Another recently begun series, for example, constitutes both a revisiting of the hybridity of nature and science in the "Graft Series" and the synthesis of nature and architecture in *The Edge of Paradise*. Consisting partly of large glass domed cylinders—blown to Penn's specifications in Mexico and set on specially milled brass bases—the works enclose airless spaces within which cast-bronze tree sections languish like specimens in the bell jars of a Victorian study. The knowledge that the bronze contents of these crystal enclosures are casts from the same tree that served as the model for *Penumbra* only bolsters the reading of the works as idealized images of quiescence. These works also have more than a coincidental formal relationship with *The Edge of Paradise*. Similarities between glass domes and invisible vaults, and the vertical parts of a tree and a forest of columns

were undoubtedly working their subtle influence over Penn when she conceived of the first of these miniature analogies to architecture. Like the pseudo-compass rings, the bell jar sculptures directly extend the conceptual issues underlying *The Edge of Paradise*.

Throughout her career Penn has demonstrated a talent for slipping easily between jewelry, sculpture, and architectural design. Some of her most recent projects have carried this versatility into the public sphere in the form of permanent installations. In 2003, Penn and artist Steve Wiman collaborated through Austin's Art in Public Places program on two extensive works for the city's new J. J. Pickle Elementary School/St. John Community Center. The facility—constructed on 15 acres in the heart of a seventy-year-old residential area—replaced 35 dwellings, most but not all of which were relocated rather than destroyed. Penn and Wiman's "The Threshold Project," consisting of narrow marble slabs engraved with the addresses of the displaced homes and set into classroom floors, halls and parking lots at the precise locations of former doorways, was conceived as a subtle means of acknowledging the area's past. More prominent are the dozens of sculptures of "The Community Core Sample Project," which are set into glass-fronted bays along the wall of a central arc-shaped corridor spanning the building. Within these architectural vitrines the artists employed geological samples from the site and salvaged traces of the demolished dwellings—doorways, benches, nails, cast-off toys and other small mementos of lives passed on the spot—to create monuments to the community's history.

The wistfulness of these displays, the impression that they generate of a tenuous balance within an abstract and airless space, reflects the distinctive sensibility that Penn has established in all her works. Perhaps the most characteristic of her contributions to the "Core Sample Project" is a poignant piece in which an angle-iron frame set into a rusted-steel grate surrounds a pair of bronze magnolia leaves loosely bound together at the stems. Mimicking the linked-diamond pattern of the grate, the leaves, one brown and the other green, are intended to symbolize the African-American residents of the community and the Latino families that have gradually moved in among them. While Penn recognizes that this integration has not transpired without conflict, her image embodies the earnest desire for harmony that the facility itself pledges to encourage. Significantly, this desire—consistently manifested in Penn's work through the tentative orchestration of an equilibrium between disparities—is always linked to the irrecoverable past, perhaps as the most effective means of indicating the ultimate impossibility of its fulfillment. Penn's ideal is implicitly Platonic, only incompletely graspable in its shadows, the penumbra in material existence. It is therefore destined to invoke a spirit of melancholy even as it reveals through its arbitration of conflicting energies the enticing glimpses of an absolute and perfect plane. ▮

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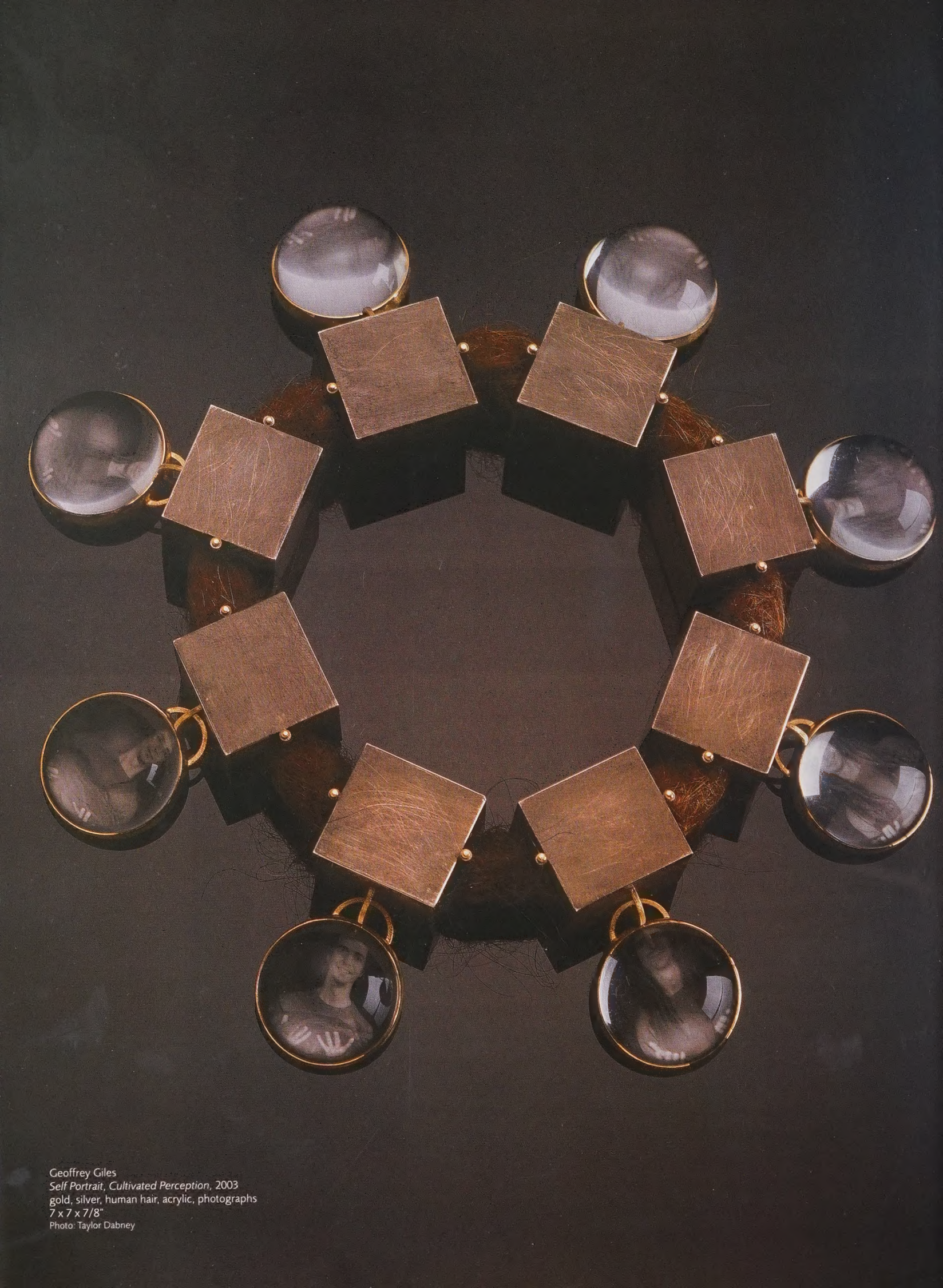
Glen R. Brown is associate professor of art history at Kansas State University.

Locus: The Spirit of Place, 2003
18k gold, silver
1 1/4 x 3 1/2"
Photo: Christopher Zaleski

"The Community Core Sample Project" (detail), 2000-2003
mixed media
40 individual compositions; each 72 x 16 x 8"
Photo: Paul Bardagjy



Geoffrey Giles
Self Portrait, Cultivated Perception, 2003
gold, silver, human hair, acrylic, photographs
7 x 7 x 7/8"
Photo: Taylor Dabney

Trinket to Talisman

Contemporary Charms

by Vicki Halper

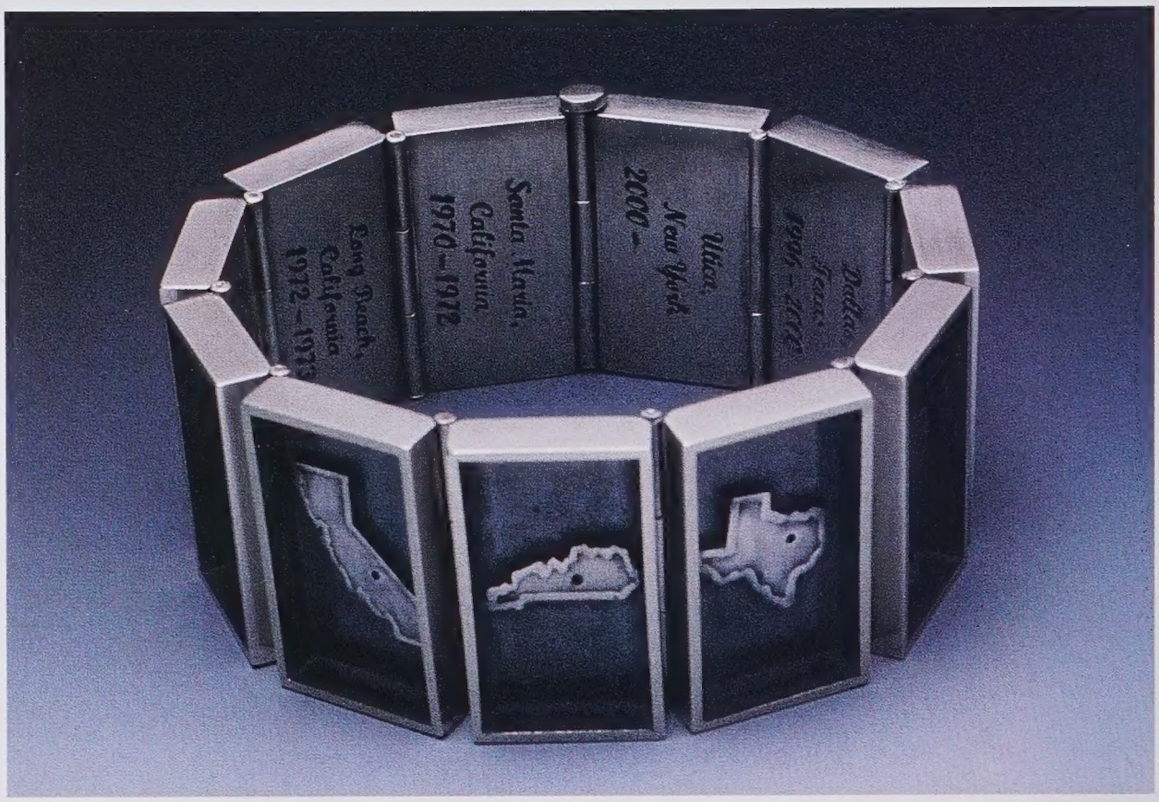
Traditional Charm Bracelets
top: 1948-56, gold, 6 3/8" long
bottom: 1959-62, gold, 7 1/2" long
Collection Marge Levy
Photo: Larry Laurence

"I don't keep a journal," says Marge Levy, former director of the Pilchuck Glass School. "My life is recorded in charm bracelets."[1] We are sitting before her collection of 102 bracelets, some bought complete, but many assembled by Levy with charms collected abroad to represent the trips that mark her history. There are also two bracelets from her youth. One she received from her parents in 1948, about the time she started school. It contains some personal references (her first tooth, a Jewish star, a classroom bell, a bicycle), but also other charms (a coffee pot, a lantern) chosen by her parents for whimsy or sheer delight. When Levy was eight years old, her father's gold baby ring was added to the bracelet, and it remains her favorite charm among the 2000 or so in her possession.

When Levy turned 16, she received a new bracelet with a large gold disk commemorating the day. Other gold charms marking her confirmation, graduation from high school, and college art major followed as she became a young adult. When her mother died, Levy removed a heart-shaped charm from her parent's bracelet and added it to hers. It is engraved on the back, "To Elaine from Maurice, 1957."[2]

Later kin to this charm collector are depicted in Jeffrey Eugenides's novel *Middlesex*. Narrator Calliope Stephanides describes the hierarchy of a private girls' school in the early 1970s. At the bottom are the Kilt Pins—"like the devices that held our tartans together [they were] unremarkable, dull, but necessary in their way." At the top are the Charm Bracelets:

> From the slender wrists of these girls, tiny silver charms were chiming together. It was the ringing of tiny tennis rackets against tiny snow skis, of miniature Eiffel Towers against half-inch ballerinas on point . . . .One girl held out her wrist to her friends, like a lady recommending a perfume. Her father had just returned from a business trip, bringing her back this latest present.
> The Charm Bracelets: they were the rulers of my new school.[3]



Chris Irick
Moving Bracelet, 2003
sterling silver
7 1/2 x 1 x 1/4"

Charm bracelets are usually worn on special occasions, like the hunters' shirts, and become the incentive for telling the tale of the bracelet's owner or beloved.

Sakurako Shimizu
Charm Bracelet Brooch, 2003
rubber
10 x 8"

Jewelry plays an ancient and well-documented role in broadcasting social status, but charm bracelets, known to almost all American women and girls since at least the 1940s, are also distantly related to traditional charms or amulets, carried for millennia to protect the wearer, avert danger, or ensure good fortune. Mesopotamian amulet seals date from the 5th millennium BCE; Egyptian scarabs date from about 3000 BCE; ancient Greeks and Romans wore images of Medusa to destroy evil powers and dogs' teeth to ward off illness; medieval Christians wore crosses to tame the devil; and Muslims wore Koranic texts in leather cases.[4] A twentieth-century warrior's shirt from Ghana is covered with such amulets, each sewn into a case and separately attached to the garment. The great collector Katherine White described the contents of the packets on a similar shirt: "passages from the Koran, magic leopards' teeth, bells, a string heart, and a shriveled sheep's vitals . . . . They say, dressed in such, a Ghanaian can face a machine gun in total safety."[5]

The contents of each packet on warriors' and hunters' shirts traditionally remain a closely guarded secret, but the sheer number of them signals a life "dedicated to acquiring new knowledge." Hunters also give amulets to professional bards or praise singers who attach them to the shirts they wear when called upon to "teach, explain, and recall historical personalities and events."[6] This marking of experience accumulated over time and link to oral history traditions is a characteristic shared by many Western charm bracelets, particularly those that sequentially honor life events such as graduations and childbirth, or that commemorate a soldier's

experience in ornaments sent from the front to adorn bracelets of loved ones at home, a subcategory of bracelet common during World War II. Charm bracelets are usually worn on special occasions, like the hunters' shirts, and become the incentive for telling the tale of the bracelet's owner or beloved.

When Gail Brown asked jewelers to create a piece for the 2003 exhibition, *Charmed Lives: Jewelry as Memento*, at Seattle's Facere Jewelry Art gallery, her role was curator-as-muse. "I wanted to present an idea that would send people off on adventures. I like to be the instigator for people to make something new," she remarked. She mailed artists an excerpted definition of "charm" from the *Oxford English Dictionary* that included references to spells, amulets, allure, attractiveness, and trinkets. The potency and breadth of her request is clear from the response of the jewelers, 55 of whom consented to do new pieces for the exhibition, many of which are vastly different from their usual work.

The conventional format of the charm bracelet, such as those in Marge Levy's collection, is condensed into an ur-bracelet by Sakurako Shimizu in her monochromatic brooch. Here the visual essentials—the chain and pendent disks—are presented as a blank slate. This silhouette of a bracelet, whose shape was taken from a photocopy of a real piece and painstakingly sawn from flooring material, is rigorously impersonal. It represents *every* bracelet, not *my* bracelet; the idea of a bracelet, not the real thing. If Shimizu had made shadows of real charms instead of simple disks, "people would question why I used the flower or the heart," she says. Instead the only question is Platonic: how do we know that a chair is a chair or a charm bracelet a charm bracelet?

In a departure from the traditional dangles, Chris Irick's charms are printed on sterling rectangles and hinged to each other. "I don't like noisy jewelry," she comments, in likely sympathy with the famous symphony conductor who once asked ladies to check their charm bracelets along with their coats.[7] Irick's *Moving Bracelet* refers to popular pieces in which enameled silhouettes of states of the Union, usually locations the wearer had visited, are linked to a chain. Each of Irick's states has a dot denoting a city she once called home and an engraved text on the back giving the dates of her residence. When asked about this minimalist timeline, Irick says, "When I think of moving I become emotionally detached because we did this so much, sometimes once a year. Still, all those moves shaped the person I am now." One day someone, following a time-honored ritual of children with their mother's charms, will sit with the artist and ask her about each move ("and then?" "and then?") and Irick will fill in the blanks.

Asante War Shirt
Ghana, 20th century
cloth, leather, twine, cowry shells, amulets
35 1/16 x 42 5/16"
Collection Seattle Art Museum
Photo: Paul Macapia

Instead of ordering her mementos chronologically along the length of a chain, Karen McCreary seems to have casually tossed them into a clear resin container. We need to seek out the story, hers or our own, which she promises is there, starting with a miniature girl in a prom dress. Between the early 1970s and 1980s, McCreary worked on and off for

Robert Ebendorf
Memories of the Past, 2003
gold, found objects (rusty nails, silver charms)
length 7"

commercial makers of charms. At Abart Manufacturing she did benchwork on silver charms called "mechanicals" that have moving parts—a shoe, for example, which opens to reveal the old lady who lives inside. She also made wax models for special orders, such as beer promotions. Later she worked at Cooper & Schuber, and remembers hand-painting the reels of cherries that fit into their diminutive slot machine. She owns a bracelet filled with dozens of Abart charms and a box of charms dating from the 1940s to the 1960s that a former boss passed on to her as mementos of their shared career.

"I don't think of charm bracelets as being minimal," McCreary says. She and other minimalists in *Charmed Lives* struggled to reconcile their usual style ("I am drawn to the non-objective work of light and space artists like Robert Irwin and Dan Flavin") with the maximalist tradition they were asked to join. McCreary returned to cast resin with inclusions, a technique she had previously used to create abstract, translucent bracelets. By doing this she got both worlds at once—a complex, layered narrative in a smooth, machined casing.

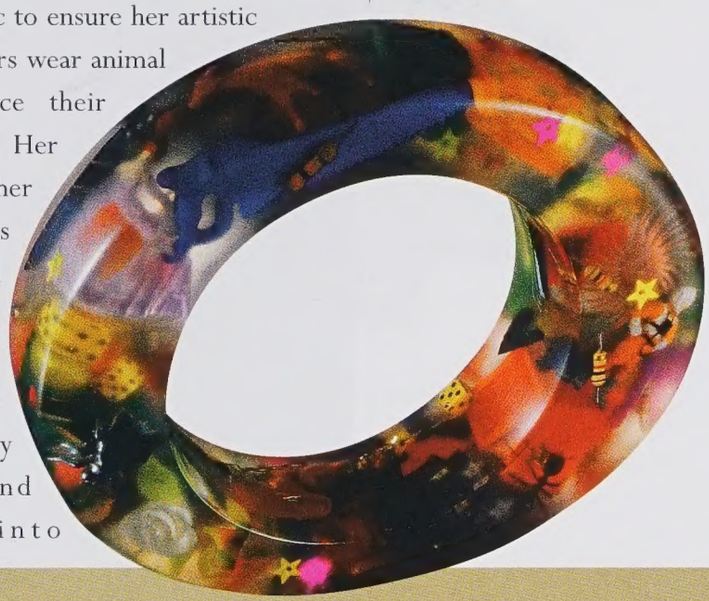
The charms of youth are insignificant and frivolous, Robert Ebendorf seems to suggest in his bracelet for the aging. Flea market trinkets (a wagon, a sandal, a cowboy hat) are dwarfed by the dominating rusty and bent nails of "life and its challenges" that the artist wrenches from decaying boards. The gold squiggles ("the

golden years?" Ebendorf wonders) that he fabricated and attached to the bracelet are fireflies to these menacing spikes. Get a tetanus shot before you put it on; don't wear white; watch your sweater. The grandparent who gives this bracelet demands to be honored as he is—crusty, gnarled, fragile, humorous, and still dangerous.

Perhaps Sonya Clark's ancestors would better suit? She did, after all, think of her Trinidad grandparents when she read the phrase "charmed lives." She wasn't glossing over their travails, but acknowledging their influence: "by their lives *my* life is charmed." Thinking of lockets, she placed their faces around her neck. One set of portraits faces the public and two other identical sets face her heart in "endearing, secretive, protectiveness." The beading in *Remembered Lives* is a metaphor for lineage: "string one to the next, to the next, to the next," Clark comments. The branching pendant refers to genealogical roots. The white and silver color of the beads honors age in the Yoruba tradition; the black beads refer to the unknown. Clark is a praise singer for her grandparents, and wears their amulet, as praise singers do, to remember their deeds.

In another neckpiece, Kathy Buszkiewicz uses sympathetic magic to ensure her artistic prowess, as hunters wear animal claws to enhance their chances of a kill. Her shawl, like all of her recent work, is made of used and shredded paper money, which she buys by the bale from the Treasury Department and transforms into

Karen McCreary
Slice of Charmed Life, 2003
mixed media in cast resin
3 1/2 x 4 x 1"



Clark is a praise singer for her grandparents, and wears their amulet, as praise singers do, to remember their deeds.

Sonya Clark
Remembered Lives, 2003
glass beads, glass, photographs
15 x 2"
Photo: Norman Watkins

Kathy Buszkiewicz
Fortuitous Warmth, 2003
U.S. currency, cord, gold
1 1/2 x 9 x 60"

Enough of the past, enough of sentiment and magic. Karen Misher's piece *Momentary* seems to proclaim the mantra of guru Ram Dass (Richard Alpert), "Be here now!" .... Years from now, a new owner will never wonder what, exactly, each charm meant to the original holder.

jewelry. For Buszkiewicz the neckpiece is not, as one might reasonably think, a summons to the gods of wealth. Instead, she attributes her recent success as an artist to the inspiration of her symbolically rich medium, and hopes that this mantle of bills will ensure her continued creative powers. Buszkiewicz also acknowledges the resemblance of her scarf to a priest's stole: "Because I teach, I sometimes feel like I'm clergy. I could put on this scarf to listen to student confessions." In this reading, "sympathetic" rather than "magic" is the operative word.

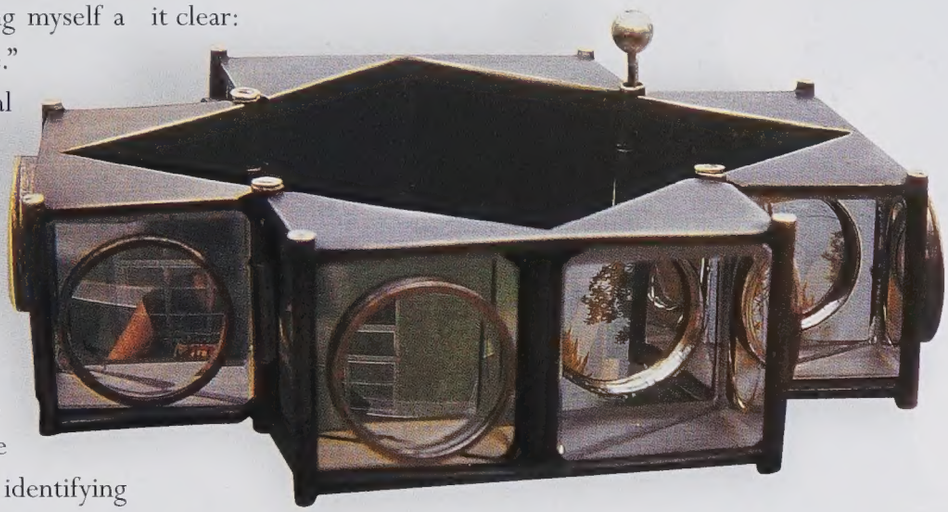
Geoffrey Giles clearly fulfills the mandate to create "jewelry as memento." His bracelet documents a recent haircut and includes physical evidence of the deed. The particular haircut is as monumental as a child's first trip to the barber. Giles, a Caucasian, had grown and worn long dreadlocks for eight years before deciding to remove them sometime after receiving the invitation to contribute to *Charmed Lives*. The dreadlocks had been both burden and gift. He wrote for the exhibition: "Whether it was the disgusting looks received whenever I went to the grocery store or the disbelief in people's eyes as

they viewed my [precisely crafted] work and myself side by side, discrimination became a constant within my life . . . . I realized that I could no longer hold preconceived notions about those around me without considering myself a hypocrite . . . . I was taught tolerance."

The bracelet, with its sequential photographs of the event dangling like charms, invokes sacrificial initiation rites. In each photo taken by his father, another lock of the artist's hair has been cut by his unseen mother and placed across his outstretched arms like an offering. The first photo, of a person whose chest-length dreadlocks are a potent identifying feature, hangs beside the last, of a clean shorn, somewhat anonymous young man who by losing his hair seems to accept the mantle of a more conventional adulthood. Did Giles worry that the loss of his hair would mean the loss of his power, as it did for the biblical Sampson? "I worried that something would be different with my jewelry when I cut my hair. I worried that I might be cutting off my talent," Giles said. Perhaps that is why the square beads with their photographic pendants are strung on a loop of Giles's own tangled hair. This hair, like the stole of money, will protect the artist's creativity.

Enough of the past, enough of sentiment and magic. Karen Misher's piece *Momentary* seems to proclaim the mantra of guru Ram Dass (Richard Alpert), "Be here now!" The optical lenses she has used in previous work have been made into her first bracelet, which reflects the ever-changing world around the wearer. This is "memento as moment," Misher says. "I'm not given to symbolism. What I like best is knowing the reflection will change every second, capturing the moment you're in." This is a bracelet whose meaning is never degraded by time. Years from now, a new owner will never wonder what, exactly, each charm meant to the original holder.

Contrast this with the thousands of charm bracelets for sale on Ebay—13,695 items were listed on January 7, 2003, for example. Add "vintage" to the search and 407 items are listed. Each of the older pieces comes as a packet of someone else's memories. Which World War II sweetheart received charms of a bomber plane and an airmail letter from her betrothed? Did he survive? Did the marriage? One seller made it clear:



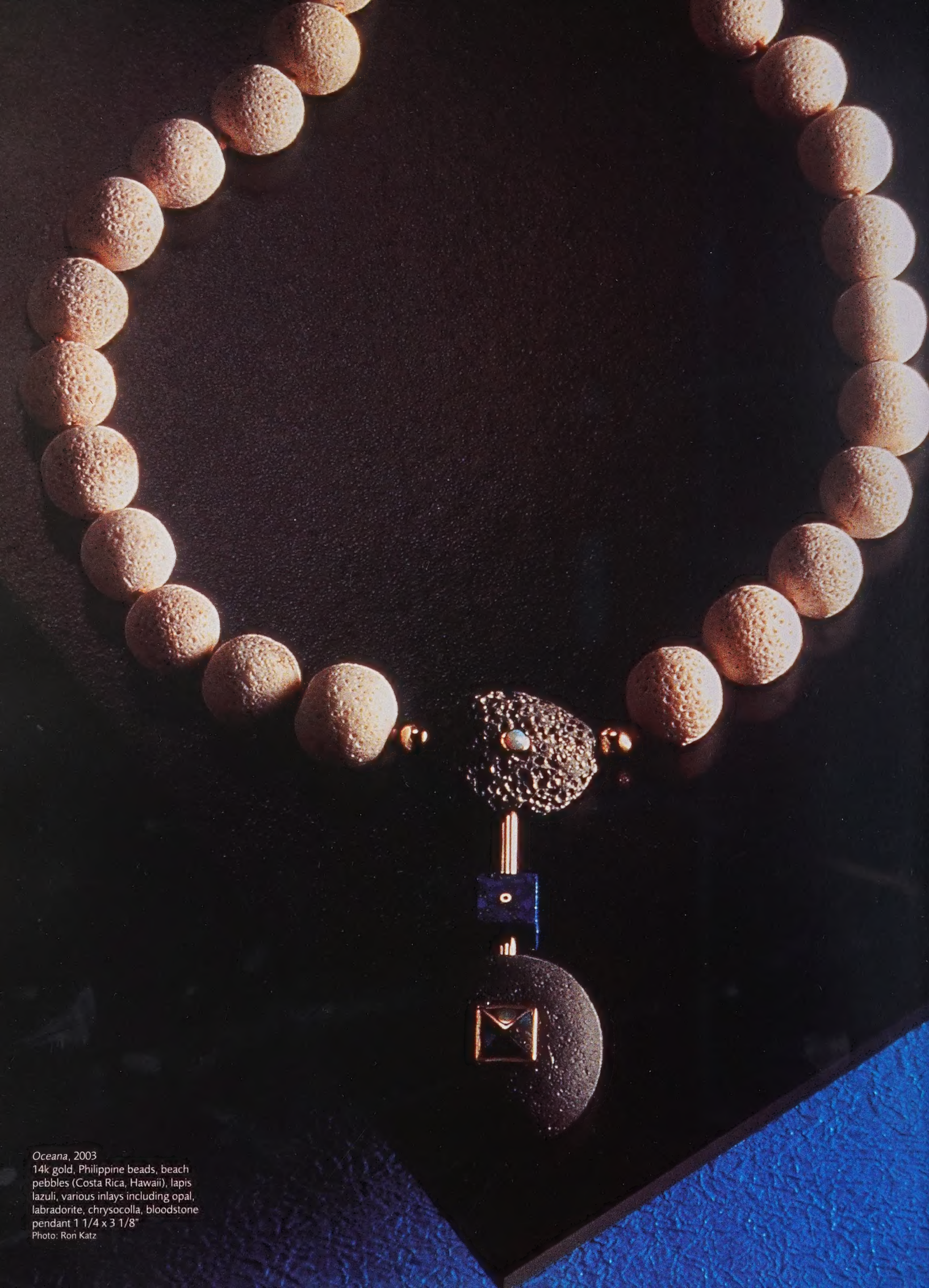
Karen Misher
Momentary, 2003
sterling, prism, optic lenses
5/8 x 5/8 x 5 1/2"

> This charm bracelet is from my childhood and it represents all my memories and my youth . . . [It includes] a sterling 1" house that opens revealing furniture (my parents evicted me from my home of 25 years), . . . a tiny ice cube in tongs (to reminding me how cold people can be) and finally a sterling enamel plaque commemorating my sweet 16 birthday from a mother who later threw her daughter on the streets over Thanksgiving. So many memories and none pleasant. It is time to pass this on to someone else.

Who then bought this dystopian bracelet? Let's hope it will be melted down and transformed into good luck charms or framed reflections of the present moment, which if bad, will surely change. ⧗

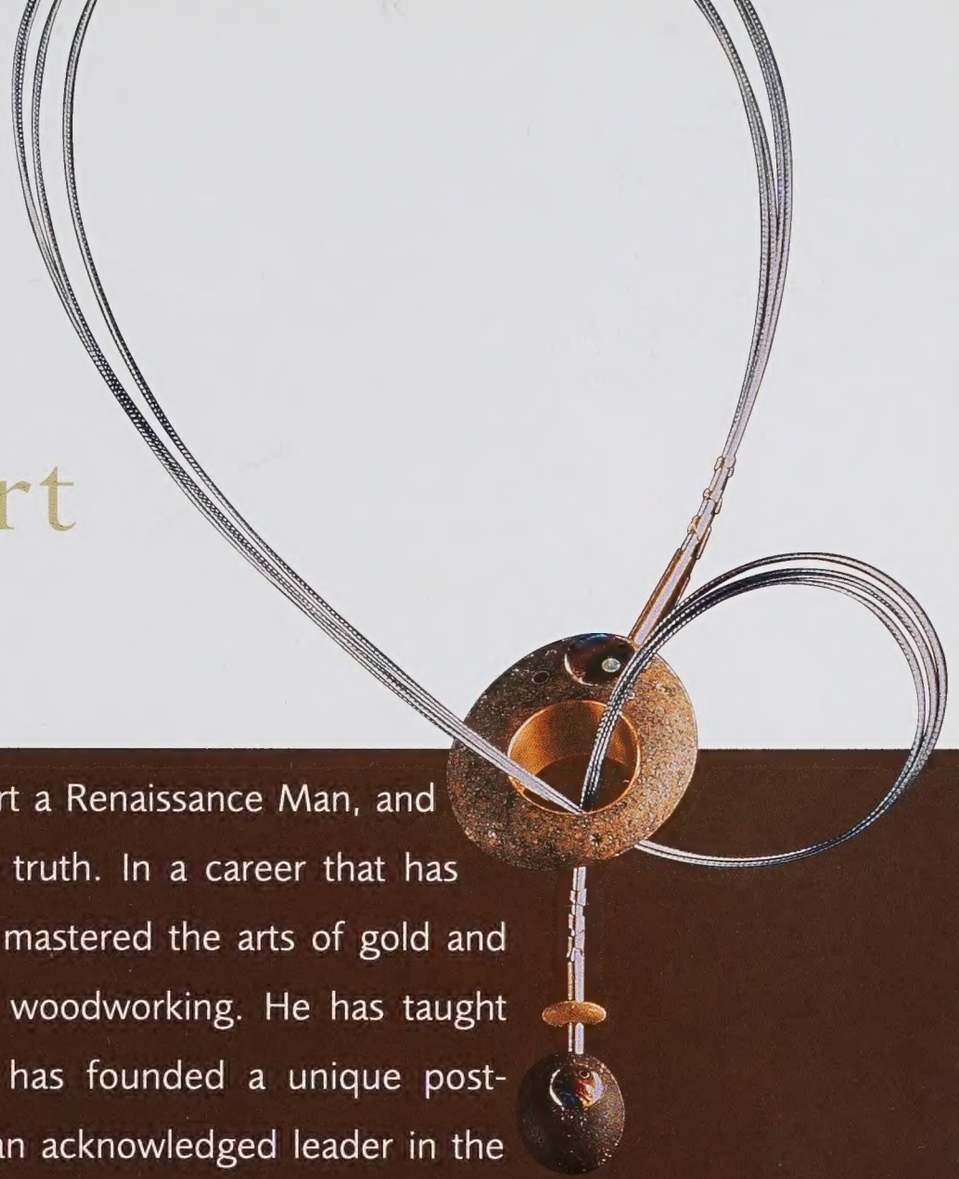
Vicki Halper, whose recent publications include *Findings: The Jewelry of Ramona Solberg*, is a former curator of modern art at the Seattle Art Museum.

1 All quotations are from interviews with the author conducted between December 2003 and January 2004 unless otherwise noted.
2 Little scholarly work has been done on charm bracelets. For a brief history, including a category of charm types, see Yvonne J. Markowitz, "Jewelry as Biography: The Charm Bracelet in Mid-20th Century America," *Adornment, the Newsletter of Jewelry and Related Arts*, vol. 3, no. 3, Fall 2001.
3 Jeffrey Eugenides, *Middlesex* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2002), 296, 298.
4 Sian Jay, "Amulet," *The Grove Dictionary of Art Online*, Oxford University Press, http://www.groveart.com.
5 Quoted in Pamela McClusky, *Art from Africa: Long Steps Never Broke a Back* (Seattle Art Museum, 2002), 64.
6 McClusky, 74.
7 Reported of Eugene Ormandy at the Philadelphia Academy of Music during the charm bracelet craze. Harold C. Schonberg, "Bangles, Candies and Latecomers," *New York Times*, August 1, 1965.



Oceana, 2003
14k gold, Philippine beads, beach pebbles (Costa Rica, Hawaii), lapis lazuli, various inlays including opal, labradorite, chrysocolla, bloodstone pendant 1 1/4 x 3 1/8"
Photo: Ron Katz

The Many Layers of Donald Stuart



by Barbara Isherwood

Someone once called Donald Stuart a Renaissance Man, and that doesn't seem too far from the truth. In a career that has stretched over 35 years, Stuart has mastered the arts of gold and silversmithing, textile weaving, and woodworking. He has taught jewelry-making around the globe, has founded a unique post-secondary jewelry program, and is an acknowledged leader in the craft world. Not content with his long list of achievements, exhibitions, commissions, titles, awards, and accolades, Stuart presses on, creating "Souvenirs," a new body of work that combines his uncanny design sense and signature inlay technique with a personal iconography that is a fresh element in his work.

"Souvenirs" is a series of jewelry objects created using pebbles and beads collected during Stuart's travels around the globe. Geography played a role in Stuart's earliest creations, inspired by the landscape of the far north. From 1969 to 1972, Stuart lived in Pangnirtung on Baffin Island in Canada's Arctic. The task he undertook there sounds formidable—teaching weaving to the Inuit, a people who had no tradition of working with fiber. He was hired because of his studies at the Ontario College of Art in Toronto, where he had majored in textiles and metals, and minored in wood. As Director of the Weaving Training Project, Stuart established what was to become the largest handweaving studio in Canada, a successful enterprise still in operation today. While on the job he learned to be an administrator, a skill that has served him well in his roles as craft world leader and teacher.

The effect of the Arctic sojourn on Stuart's object-making was immense—the crisp lines, windswept vegetation, and earth tones of the land still resonate in his work more than three decades later. The northern motifs appeared first in his weaving, but then carried on into metals, which became his focus beginning in 1978. Sometimes the references are overt. A piece of multicolored

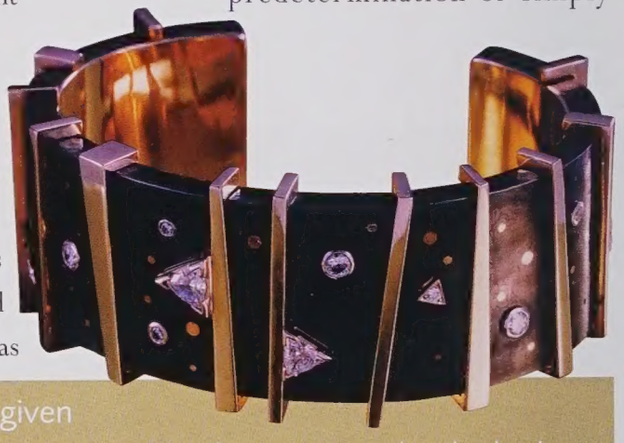
Entre Amis-East/West, 2003
14k gold, steel cable, beach pebbles (from Scot's Bay, Nova Scotia; San Simeon, California), various inlays (sugilite, ebony, lapis lazuli, labradorite, opal, 14k gold)
large pebble 2 x 2 1/4"
Photo: Ron Katz

labradorite evokes the mottled hues of the Aurora Borealis when set with diamonds and nestled in a golden mountain (*Starry Night Brooch/Pendant*, 1993). Planes of steel set with round and triangular shaped diamonds echo a brilliant night sky in the clear, cold, northern air (*Bracelet*, 1994). In other pieces, the influence of the Arctic is less obvious, but just as deeply entrenched. It took an observer to point out to Stuart that the circle that appears so frequently in his work is a stand-in for the Arctic sun. As Stuart points out, the sun is of paramount importance in the far north, where the Land of the Midnight Sun endures six months of darkness.

It was in the Arctic that Stuart first tried inlay, the technique that has become his signature. The resource-rich land provided a wealth of colorful semi-precious stones that the artist felt inspired to incorporate into his jewelry. Having studied weaving and woodworking as well as metals, Stuart was comfortable working with mixed media. However, his knowledge of the centuries-old technique was theoretical rather than practical. Looking at ancient Egyptian jewelry had given him an appreciation of how colored stones could enliven a piece, but he had no experience in creating inlay himself—his training at the Ontario College of Art had been strong on design, but limited in technique due to the rudimentary equipment available at the time. So he taught himself. With hindsight, Stuart laughs at his first crude method of cutting stones, which consisted of "hacking off edges with wire snips, then using sand paper in order to get them to fit." In the late 1970s Stuart went to Labrador to teach jewelry-making at a company that produced cabochon stones. While there he discovered lapidary equipment, and was able to refine his technique considerably.

Years of working with inlay have led to a number of innovations, most notably the setting of slices of tubing into epoxy resin to create areas of geometric design that provide a contrast to the sections of flat colored inlays. Often the tubing is so tiny, one marvels at the patience that must be required to work at such a minute scale. Stuart cites his astrological sign, Virgo, by way of explanation—Virgos are typically meticulous and dedicated to perfection.

Virgos are also noted for their developed social awareness, and their knowledge of, and interest in education. Whether celestial predetermination or simply coincidence, these qualities fit Stuart to a T. Upon his return from the Arctic in 1972, Stuart began a teaching career that lasted 29 years. He started as an instructor in textiles, metals, and design at Georgian College, in the city of Barrie, one hour north of Toronto. In 1985 he was asked by the dean of the school to develop a Jewelry and Metals Program. The resulting course is Stuart's pride and joy. During a tour of the facilities, he jokingly refers to it as the "Jewelry Empire," a term he came up with when, in deference to the fine art department's need for high ceilings, the jewelry program was moved to the outer perimeters of the college. Stuart made the best of the situation and, through his drive and charisma, both the program's stature and facilities have grown tremendously; today the program is recognized throughout North America as unique. Studies include a paid co-op placement, so graduates enter the field with valuable hands-on experience. In speaking of his graduates, Stuart beams with pride at their achievements, which include numerous



Bracelet, 1994
18k gold, steel, diamonds
3 x 2 1/4 x 1 3/8"
Photo: Ron Katz

Looking at ancient Egyptian jewelry had given him an appreciation of how colored stones could enliven a piece, but he had no experience in creating inlay...so he taught himself.

Starry Night Brooch/Pendant, 1993
18k gold, labradorite, diamonds
2 3/8 x 1 1/2"
Photo: Diamond Information Centre

Filipina, 2003
18k gold, Philippine coral beads,
various inlays
large bead 1 3/8 x 1 1/8 x 1"
Photo: Ron Katz

international awards. In 2001, he was named Georgian College's first Professor Emeritus, in honor of his exemplary contributions to the college and to his field.

With his illustrious teaching career monopolizing the limelight, does Stuart ever feel that his work as a craftsperson is overshadowed? "That I've been able to balance all of that is very gratifying," says Stuart. However, he does admit to some frustration at what he perceives as a lack of appreciation for teaching. "You're teaching a new generation, developing the future, but there's little recognition for that."

As the sole supporter of his wife and two children for many years, a career in teaching was not an option for Stuart. The only break he took in 29 years was a sabbatical from 1978 to 1981, when he studied for his Master of Fine Arts in silversmithing at the School of American Crafts in Rochester, New York. The return to school was prompted by his decision to give up working in textiles, which no longer excited him, in favor of concentrating on metals. In Rochester, Stuart studied stone setting and casting, and fell madly in love with silversmithing, inspired by his teacher, the Danish silversmith Hans Christensen. He chose a thesis topic that would stretch his skills—the creation of a tankard with square corners, which won an award. One of his first efforts in casting also won an award—his *Penannular Brooch* from 1979, inspired by Celtic pins. Featuring inlays of agate, caribou antler, tiger's eye, ligmavitae, ebony, jasper, pyrites, and copper ore, the piece illustrates Stuart's skill at combining multiple colors and textures while retaining the simplicity and spare lines of the British and Scandinavian Modern design that has been his prime artistic influence. Winning Best of Show in the Rochester-Finger Lakes Show with this piece was Stuart's first international award, and a significant boost to his confidence.

From the early 1980s on, Stuart's artistic production included numerous pieces made for competitions, and many private and corporate commissions. Stuart loves the challenge of competitions. It is in this realm that his outstanding skill at rendering comes to the fore. "It took me years to develop a system which I

think is no-fail," explains Stuart, who has developed a process of simplification that successfully captures the sparkle of the precious materials he relishes. In contrast to the reverse snobbism that eschews gold and diamonds, Stuart takes pleasure in using "luxury" metals and stones. Noting that the cost of his labor is the same whether he's working in brass or 18k gold, Stuart explains, "The truth is, 18k gold is so much more wonderful to work with, it's easier to work with than brass."

Unlike some craftspeople who prefer to delve into their own psyches for artistic material, Stuart cherishes the commissioning process, where his ideas combine with that of the client to create a piece. He tells a story of the commission for a coffee service for Canadian craft connoisseur Joan Chalmers. She at first resisted participating in the design process, simply stating that she wanted it to be the best of Donald Stuart. "You just go ahead and make it," she told him. "Well, then, I won't," was Stuart's reply. "Where I get excitement is coming up with some concepts based on your likes and dislikes, and having you react to those," he told Chalmers. "And you might send me off in a direction I'd never thought of." The resulting work bespeaks a magnificent union of minds and matter. The pyramidal silver forms are echoed by ebony handles, while 14k gold rods provide a contrasting horizontal element.

Penannular Brooch, 1979
sterling silver, inlays of agate, caribou antler, tiger's eye, ligmavitae, ebony, jasper, pyrites, copper ore
3 x 8 1/4"

opposite page
Gloria in excelsis, 1989
brass, copper, aluminum, purple heart, birch, mahogany, fabric appliqué
26' 3" x 5' 9"
Photo: Robert McNair

Another important source of commissions has been the church, for which Stuart has designed liturgical vessels, candelabras, crosses, and large wall pieces, including the beautiful *Gloria in excelsis*, a twenty-five-foot-high dossal created in 1989 for the Benton Street Baptist Church in Kitchener, Ontario. Stuart exercises his facility in multiple media in this colorful work, as layers of brass, copper, aluminum, purple heart, birch, mahogany, and fabric appliqué soar toward the heavens.

The aspect of human interaction that Stuart enjoys in his commission work is a thread that runs through all his activities. Alongside his teaching, Stuart has accumulated hundreds of hours of volunteering in the service of craft. Tenures on the boards and as an executive of the Canadian Crafts Council, Visual Arts Ontario, the Canadian Jewellers Institute, the Royal Canadian Academy of the Arts, the Ontario Crafts Council, and the Society of North American Goldsmiths (SNAG) have given him insight into the larger picture of crafts in North America, and allowed him to be an active advocate on behalf of his calling. His efforts have been recognized through the bestowal of such honors as the Order of Ontario, the John Mather Award for Service to the Crafts, admittance into the Royal Academy of Arts, and most recently, the prestigious Order of Canada.

Whereas Stuart speaks volubly and passionately about the trials and triumphs of establishing the jewelry program, his adventures in international volunteering, or the inner machinations of the craft world, he needs some prompting when it comes to talking about his own craft. His motto on his resume expresses his philosophy in that regard: "I want to design and make beautiful objects in such a way that the beauty and craftsmanship speak for themselves." Discussions of his work frequently digress into tales involving people, rather than objects. The creative impulse behind his impeccably designed

"I want to design and make beautiful objects in such a way that the beauty and craftsmanship speak for themselves."

Coffee Service, 1992
sterling silver, 14k gold, ebony
15 x 15 x 13"
Collection M. Joan Chalmers and Barbara K. Amesbury
Photo: Ron Katz

Lei Palaoa, 2003
sterling silver, fresh water pearls, various inlays
pendant 1 1/4 x 1 3/8 x 2 3/4"
Photo: Ron Katz

jewelry and holloware arises from an intuitive level that is perhaps less easily articulated than an anecdote about his days as SNAG president. It seems significant that it is teachers and how they taught (both good and bad), rather than artists and their works, which have left a lasting mark in his memory. People are the reason craft exists, and are foremost in Stuart's mind.

So what about "Souvenirs," this new body of work that Stuart created based on his travels? Well, there's a significant "people" element here, too. "Souvenirs" grew out of Stuart's international teaching activities. As a volunteer with CESO (Canadian Executive Service Organization), Stuart taught jewelry-making in the Philippines, Sri Lanka, Costa Rica, and Lesotho. CESO volunteers are billeted in local homes, and participate in community activities as part of the family. "This is seeing a country like a tourist doesn't see. You may not be able to speak the language but you share the same love," the artist enthuses. Although the facilities he encounters during his assignments may not have modern equipment, Stuart is unfazed. After all, we're taking about a man who still uses a propane torch on occasion. He thanks his first days at the Ontario College of Art for his philosophy of tools: "Doing it with what you have, as opposed to, you have to buy a $30,000 machine." That's how he teaches students today, so that they can still make work without the benefits of a luxuriously equipped studio.

"His effect on Canada's arts and crafts industry has been profound and lasting."

The fond times and new friends garnered through his trips come together in *Entre Amis-East/West* (2003). Featuring beach pebbles collected in Nova Scotia and California, this necklace hangs together in the form of a lariat, an innovation that Stuart credits to a friend, who looped the piece's stone pendant under and through the central stone disc in order to secure it. *Entre Amis* showcases Stuart's latest wrinkle on the inlay technique—setting inlays within inlays. A tiny opal circle sits in another inlaid circle of lapis lazuli, ebony, and miniscule gold spheres, which is in turn set into the work's center piece, a large beach stone that has been hollowed out and lined with 14k gold. Another pebble, also inlaid, drops through the central opening on a steel cable. Stuart gets a kick out of the combination of steel, pebbles, and gold, flying in the face of the hierarchy of materials in a bolder way than he has done before.

The travelogue vein pursued in *Entre Amis* reappears in the necklaces *Lei Palaoa*, *Filipina, Oceana,* and *Sea to Sea to Sea*, all created in 2003. *Lei Palaoa* combines geographical references and sculptural form with inlays that occupy the object's surface in a new way. The unusual form, somewhat like a fishhook, was inspired by a traditional type of Hawaiian regal ornamentation seen by Stuart when he was a visiting professor at the University of Hawaii. The curved bottom of the cast silver form is dotted with circular inlays, more spaciously and irregularly arranged than his usually tightly knit compositions. On the form's side, a breathtaking section of inlay featuring an intricate pattern of circles echoes the small spheres on the bottom. The inlays on the upper stem are more densely applied, with triangles, rectangles, tube sections, and teardrop shapes fitted together, mosaic fashion. The palette speaks of the sea and the tropics, with shades of blue and green predominating. Chains of seed pearls and silver beads marry the natural and constructed aspects of the piece. Like much of Stuart's jewelry, *Lei Palaoa* combines beauty with a weighty feel—this is a piece that could be worn by either sex.

Filipina showcases coral beads collected in the Philippines. The large red beads are irregular pyramids that have been sanded smooth. Three 18k gold beads of Stuart's creation punctuate the bottom center of the necklace, their forms

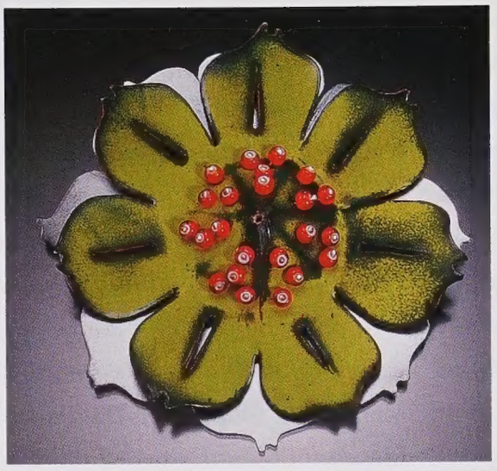
echoing those of the coral. Stuart's beads are inlaid all around, a process the artist likens to "three dimensional chess," as the curved surface created extra challenges in fitting. "I generally think of an hour to cut any one inlay—those took several hours." The fastening mechanism, a gold bar and triangle, was designed to be sculptural, to complement the bead forms. Each half is set with tiny inlays that go all the way through—typical of Stuart, every detail is considered.

Oceana is the most striking piece of the series, pared down in both color and form. Round and wonderfully nubbly off-white beads from the Philippines form a necklace that culminates in a oval-shaped piece of lava from Hawaii, from which a small cube of lapis lazuli and a pebble from Costa Rica are suspended, skewered by an 14k gold rod. Inlay is sparingly applied, with a tiny opal in the center pebble, a miniscule gold sphere in the lapis cube, and a four-sided pyramid inlay of opal, labradorite, chrysocolla, and bloodstone in the bottom pebble. Despite its apparent simplicity, *Oceana* was technically demanding. As Stuart points out, "There's no magic way of cutting a square in a stone—I just hacked away at it with my diamond drill and a flex shaft." Making a circle would have been less work, but Stuart doesn't cut corners when it comes to the integrity of his designs.

Now that he has retired from full-time teaching, Stuart plans to spend more time creating work—or so he says. Already the inner professor has sent him off for more overseas volunteering in the Philippines, and at the time of writing he was preparing to teach an inlay workshop in California organized by colleague Marilyn da Silva. In 2002 Stuart was made a Member of the Order of Canada, the nation's highest honor for lifetime achievements. In their summation of Stuart's career, the Chancellery of the Governor General's office states, "His effect on Canada's arts and crafts industry has been profound and lasting." A significant portion of Stuart's contribution to craft stems from his outgoing perspective and the generosity with which he shares his skills and knowledge. Whether his production increases, or continues sharing the stage with his teaching and volunteering activities, the craft world will only be enriched by his contributions. ⧗

Donald Stuart conducting a class in Cebu, Philippines, 2003

Barbara Isherwood is a Toronto-based writer on visual arts.



"MARJORIE SIMON: BOTANICA"

OBJECTS OF DESIRE GALLERY,
LOUISVILLE, KENTUCKY
SEPTEMBER 5-OCTOBER 6, 2003

by FELICIA SZORAD

Marjorie Simon's recent exhibition at Objects of Desire Gallery marks her third solo installation of botanical jewelry works in as many years. Simon conceived her floral series during a hiatus from her workbench while she recovered from a rotator cuff injury. She spent her physical recovery examining plant life through a microscope and detailing her findings in pen and ink. Once Simon returned to the studio, her research grew into three-dimensional compositions of silver, gold, copper, torch-fired vitreous enamel, and semi-precious stones.

Simon's earliest botanical works, true to their point of departure, had an ambiguous, cell-like quality. The most cellular were complex fabrications with deeply etched or hammered surface textures and vibrant enamel and stone in contrasting colors to heighten both complexity and texture. Simon soon expanded her series to incorporate ancient Egyptian and Greek floral motifs and switched from torch firing to kiln firing three-dimensional forms. As a result, Simon's next generation of work was more overtly floral and more fully in the round. Jewelry consisting of tapered, tube-like spiculum and multi-petal, folded blooms communicated volume through hammering and shaping as opposed to strict fabrication. Texture became less discernable and colors, though still vibrant and varied, became more closely related within individual works. The ancient floral grouping featured compositions delicate in scale and in detail.

If her previous works referenced exotic gardens of antiquity, Simon's latest collection illustrates a typical American flowerbed complete with sunflower, zinnia and gerbera daisy. Sometimes reminiscent of past works in form, texture, and color, the new grouping is decidedly bolder and more direct in all three arenas. "Botanica" is Simon's most concise floral work to date, revealing a simplicity and grace that is indicative of a well-studied idea.

Large, enameled copper and sterling brooches representing single blooms, in combination with neck strands of multiple smaller flowers, provide differing interpretations of a limited and specific subject. Differences in jewelry format are supported by subtle form, texture, and color distinctions. The spiculum remains a well-used element while shallowly die-formed and minimally folded floras complete Simon's streamlined formal vocabulary. Many of the new shapes are less volumetric than those used in the ancient floral grouping. The new forms are also larger in scale and are often layered one on top of another, implying a weight and depth that renders flatness visually appropriate. Rather than appearing sophomoric, the sheet-like quality of Simon's new jewelry communicates a conscious simplification.

Texture is likewise evolved; Simon incorporated piercing in previous works, but rolled, etched, or hammered surface textures were more prevalent. Works from Simon's new grouping display textures that are less surface-bound. Many brooches exhibit subtle bending and piercing that Simon attributes to experimentation with origami and kirigami, Japanese paper folding and cutting techniques. The physical layering of shapes within individual works, as described earlier, also creates a form of texture. *Saadyah's Garden,* an enameled copper and silver brooch is a prime example of Simon's use of form as texture. A sprinkling of lumpy, pink freshwater pearls near the center of a folded, pierced, pink bloom layered over a similarly bent, cut, sterling backdrop, creates a multidimensional texture. *Fluffy Red*, a composition of numerous four-petaled blooms with silver grommet centers looped through and among more than 40 large, silver rings, is likewise textural as a result of shape repetition and shape layering. Simon's highly physical approach to texture is so aesthetically appealing that her few lingering examples of rolled surface texture, as in *Sunflower Skeleton*, appear predictable in comparison.

Simon often describes color, specifically color created by fusing ground glass to metal, as one of her artistic passions. Always a prominent element in her jewelry work, color continues to play an important role in these recent pieces. Simon favors dramatic color, and certainly drama is not lost in this newest grouping. Yet the relationships between colors, within individual works as well as the grouping as a whole, are much calmer than in her previous series. Simon employs monochromatic and analogous color schemes to achieve unity where she once used complementary, split complementary, or triadic schemes to achieve dissonance. The majority of one-bloom brooches feature a single enamel color, varied only by the blackened, torch-singed edges. Simon's decision to maintain color intensity yet decrease color variety allows for a more orderly refined drama. The bold scale, form, and texture of individual compositions is highlighted rather than diminished as a result of streamlined color use. Another noteworthy development is Simon's use of non-color, or more accurately, the pale gray of oxidized silver.

Though silver has often served as a connector between or a support for enameled components, this botanical grouping features multiple works composed primarily of silver and void of enamel. The silver jewelry, often adorned with a central cluster of pearls or faceted gemstone beads, provides a quiet, neutral foil to more vibrant pieces. There exists a middle ground between the underdeveloped idea and the stagnant idea. Simon's "Botanica" comfortably inhabits this enviable position.

Felicia Szorad is a metalsmith and assistant professor of art at Eastern Kentucky University in Richmond, Kentucky.

clockwise from left
Fluffy Red Necklace, 2003
vitreous enamel on copper, sterling silver
17" long
Photo: Ralph Gabriner

Saadyah's Garden (brooch), 2001
vitreous enamel on copper, sterling silver
3 1/2" diameter
Photo: Ralph Gabriner

9/11 Brooch, 2002
sterling silver, pearls
3 1/2" diameter
Photo: Robert Diamante

"RITA GROSSE-RUYKEN: DURCHFLUTUNG (RAYS OF LIGHT)"

GOETHE-INSTITUT, NEW YORK CITY
JANUARY 14-28, 2004

by TONI GREENBAUM

Rita Grosse-Ruyken is a metalsmith of mind-boggling skill. She creates gold and silver vessels with walls so thin they quiver at the slightest air current. Eight bowls, one made from gold and seven of silver, are the principle components of "Durchflutung (Rays of Light)," a multi-media form-light-sound-space installation, first mounted at the Museum für Angewandte Kunst in Frankfurt as part of the exhibition "Corporal Identity–Body Language," which was later shown at New York's Museum of Arts and Design. "Rays of Light" has less contextual relationship with that formidable exhibition, however, than with "Singular Forms (Sometimes Repeated): Art from 1951 to the Present," on view at the Guggenheim Museum in spring 2004. Within the scope of one installation, Grosse-Ruyken manages to address several prodigious issues at the forefront of art discourse for the past 50 years, particularly the physicality of objects, repetition, light, sound, the sometimes equivocal nature of written text's ability to communicate meaning, and the spiritual aspect of mathematics.

Since 1984, Grosse-Ruyken has worked toward perfecting her raising technique, which was at first based upon fortifying a gold vessel with one or two platinum rings, a method patented by the Neissing Company of Vreden, Germany. She regards the bowl as a ritual object, and the first sculptural form, "binding cosmic light energy and radiance." Like the Holy Grail, a huge basin of pure gold, narrowly rimmed at the top in platinum, stands mounted on a stele in the center of an almost perfectly square white room. It is surrounded by seven smaller silver receptacles, each also perched on a pedestal. Representing the "Seven Bowls of Judgment," they tilt precariously, symbolizing the pouring forth of God's wrath. Taken individually, the vials recall *Chicken's Egg, Polished, Raw, Size 0* (1994) by Karin Sander at the Guggenheim. Both artists have taken a common, albeit primal, object out of context and accorded it reverential status by isolating it atop a column, then vex the viewer by finishing the piece in such a way as to risk its dissolution—in Sander's case by polishing the fragile raw egg to a high shine and in Grosse-Ruyken's by hammering the metal walls paper thin. The very process of the objects' creation could lead to their undoing. In both instances, the viewer is forced to ponder how the objects remain intact, maintain their forms, and keep from imploding.

While Grosse-Ruyken offers text with her pieces, the words are more ambiguous than clarifying. The artist projects excerpts from the Apocalyptic Vision of St. John on the four walls of the gallery. Only snatches of the scripture, however, are decipherable. Her eccentric hieroglyphs, inferring biblical origins, slant and sway too radically to be read. Grosse-Ruyken seeks to illuminate in a more immediate manner. She uses light in the context of a totally white environment to provide a primary experience and evoke a visceral response, which is activated by the physical effects of light, itself, along with one's cognitive sense. Light implies warmth, perception, knowledge, divinity, and happiness. Grosse-Ruyken gradates and manipulates light to alter the ephemeral energy of various areas within the room, further distilling information through the light of radiant runic characters.

Auditory sensation (or the absence thereof) can enhance a fundamentally visual experience. Grosse-Ruyken utilizes both sound and silence to heighten the spirituality of her space. All outside noises, even the slight tapping of heels upon the floor, are barred from the room by means of felt overshoes donned upon entrance to the installation, while background "music," provided by a recording of the earth's primal acoustic phenomena along with the high vibrating tones of the sun, thrums continuously.

Much of the installation's power lies in repetition. One bowl is gorgeous; several, mounted in series, are glorious. This variation on

a theme recalls Rachel Whiteread's *Untitled (One Hundred Spaces)* (1995) that first greets visitors to the Guggenheim and invites comparison. Both artists proffer a curious inversion. Whiteread seeks to render unseen enclosures visible with her multiple, cast resin units. Grosse-Ruyken wishes to achieve just the opposite: dematerialization of things that, in fact, exist.

Toni Greenbaum is an art historian specializing in twentieth- and twenty-first-century jewelry and metalwork.

clockwise from left
Silver-Light-Bowls, 1989-93
From "The Seven Bowls of Judgment"
pure silver
height each approx 5"

Rays of Light, 1984-85
pure gold
9 1/4 x 17 1/4"

Silver-Light-Bowl, 2002/03
From "The Seven Bowls of Judgment"
pure silver
5 3/8 x 7 78"

"TRACY KRUMM: (RE)CONCILIATIONS"

LINDA DURHAM CONTEMPORARY ART, NEW YORK CITY
JANUARY 8-FEBRUARY 12, 2004

by KAREN CHAMBERS

In "(Re)Conciliations" at Linda Durham Contemporary Art, Tracy Krumm's solo show featured sculptures made of crocheted wire with found or fabricated metal objects. The works immediately evoked a recollection of the art of Elaine Reichek, Brenda Miller, Ann Wilson, Robert Morris, Eva Hesse, and Mary Shaffer, yet Krumm's sculptures are not derivative.

Like Miller and Reichek, she emphasizes the repetitive nature of women's work. When she was seven, Tracy Krumm's Iowa-farm-wife grandmothers taught her to crochet. They crocheted for hours on end, decorating mundane and functional items. Like Shaffer who "drapes" molten glass from reclaimed tools, Krumm uses rescued objects to "present" her lacy crochetwork. The suspension of Krumm's crocheted panels recalls how Wilson hung fabrics, Morris felt, and Hesse a variety of industrial materials. Those connections are clear, and Krumm herself acknowledges the influence of Martin Puryear and Andy Goldsworthy as well as Hesse. Still, Krumm's work is unique.

Krumm's pieces demonstrate a wonderful play between the delicate and the robust, the feminine and the masculine. She is skilled at creating a balance between the fineness of the wire and the rugged quality of the found objects. This is true even in *Cable (Cable)* where a loop of thick cable is suspended from a hefty hook. On closer inspection, the dangling cable is revealed to be made up of a crocheted chain of fine wire bunched into a rope, which is itself knotted or crocheted. Despite the beefier scale, Krumm is still playing thick versus, relatively, thin.

Krumm's formal elements also communicate a message about gender, yet her work is not dogmatically "feminist." *Yoke/Curtain* could make such a statement but it is tempered by the compelling and elegant composition. Although a "curtain" of crocheted wire hangs from a yoke, its formal qualities take precedence over its symbolic ones.

This tension between the formal and the symbolic is reversed in *2: Balanced*. Two large crocheted panels puddle on the floor, suspended from an "S" hook and a sharpened hook that respectively represent feminine and masculine. These two hooks are hung on a balance arm and the two sides are equally balanced.

Eight of the works on view were large, but there were also four wall-mounted pieces on a more intimate scale. Here Krumm focused on the female. *Balancing Pair* utilized the same composition as the much larger *2 Balanced*, but here the balance is between two crocheted fish forms, which suggest feminine torsos.

In *Shield/Small* and *Shield/Bib* Krumm has crocheted a delicate and jewelry-like collar and a bib. As much as they evoke necklaces, the crocheted "fabric" is also gathered onto metal loops that are too small to be worn, perhaps representing constriction or even strangling. Still, a message about feminine strength is communicated as *Small* stands away from the wall, quite on its own and unsupported—free and flying—and *Bib* also refuses to succumb to gravity.

Krumm has a background in the textile arts and even worked as a production weaver. That activity led her to nonfunctional textile works and by 1986 to two-dimensional and three-dimensional cast paper pieces, created a year before she received her B.F.A. from the California College of Arts and Crafts in San Francisco.

Ten years later, living in New Mexico and with an M.F.A. from Vermont College of Norwich University, Krumm exhibited her first crocheted-wire sculptures. The use of wire came from a serendipitous discovery of a spool of wire in a disused science lab at Vermont College. Reportedly tired of the two-dimensional, mixed-media textile-and-paper pieces she had been working on, Krumm began crocheting the little bags. In these transitional pieces, crocheted wire bags "emerged from holes in the paper, the fragility of their openwork contrasting strongly with the density of the cast-paper service," writes Jan Janeiro in *Fiberarts* (November/December 1996).

Krumm's work is rigorous, but enchanting. In an artist's statement, she writes, "Process and product are completely intertwined to integrate remnants of time, culture, personal history, and the physical environment. I am continually exploring these issues of accommodation, obsession, and transformation and how these inform the content of my work." Krumm's explorations make for a visually satisfying and an intellectually stimulating experience that is as balanced as her works.

New York-based **Karen Chambers** writes about the visual arts and design.

clockwise from left
Shield/Bib, 2003
crocheted and fabricated metal and found objects
15 x 10 x 2"

Yoke/Curtain, 2003
crocheted and fabricated metal and found objects
73 x 57 x 8"

Balanced, 2003
crocheted and fabricated metal and found objects
121 x 114 x 82"

"JEWELS & GEMS"

THE RENWICK GALLERY, WASHINGTON, D.C.
SEPTEMBER 26, 2003–FEBRUARY 8, 2004

by SARAH TANGUY

The hunt for value is a never-ending enterprise, and, as this survey of American studio jewelry attests, its discovery can often be a welcome and refreshing change. While the 97 artists exhibited here hark back to a time when jewelers were held in the same esteem as other artists at European courts, they also point to something profoundly American...the validation of personal vision, innovation, and creativity. "Jewels & Gems" brings this exciting development to life by exploring its origins and other key topics: its rethinking of value and materials, its incorporation of ritual and narrative, and its ties to other art forms. One hundred and thirty-nine examples from the Renwick Gallery's collection of brooches, necklaces, rings, and bracelets make abundantly clear the artistic impact of eschewing the jewelry industry and the guild tradition in favor of the lone studio and academic training. Not only is value transferred to one-of-kind pieces and to unorthodox materials, but the meaning of beauty and jewelry's relation to its owner is experienced in new ways.

Arline Fisch's 1971 silver *Body Ornament* is an initial showstopper. Echoing the ribcage, the design of hammered slats and cascading tassels boldly enlists the entire body to create a lure for both wearer and viewer. Another example of poetry in motion is Sondra Sherman's slinky *M-O-P Button Necklace*. A play on words and a sly commentary on class, it revises the classic pearl necklace by lacing mother of pearl buttons to a Möbius loop design. The visual appeal of Donald Friedlich's conceptual *Translucence Series Brooch*—an oblong of clear glass with an etched design set into a bowed gold frame—depends on seeing through to the clothing underneath. From the extroverted to the introverted, Roberta Williamson's pin *You're Perfect* professes her private love for her child with severe scoliosis. Here, relative perfection and beauty are quietly captured through the image of the much-maligned fly.

The legacy of René Lalique graces Jim Kesco's *Gingko Brooch*—a delicate spray of translucent, moonstone, and bighorn sheep horn leaves anchored by gold rivets. A kindred spirit animates Jennifer Trask's *October Necklace*, where circular lockets of feathers, butterfly wings, mineral ores, and natural materials evoke treasured curiosities or memento mori. By contrast, a sense of whimsy turns Barbara Walter's *Two-Finger Carousel Ring Toy*, complete with movable animal parts, into an ode to childhood toys and pastimes. History and popular culture commingle in J. Fred Woell's *The American Scene*. One of earliest instances of found objects, the brooch combines a Civil War bullet fragment, portraits of Abraham Lincoln and Colonel Sanders, the corporate name "Kentucky Fried Chicken," and the inscription "Our Lady of the Highway Pray for Us."

A stellar rethinking of pageantry is Tina Fung Holder's *Neckpiece 48.188*. Its radiating bands of black safety pins and copper-colored beads riff on tribal pectorals, while its title reflects the contemporary fine arts practice of numbering the work by its creation date. Adjacent necklaces by agitator Joyce Scott and pioneer Bob Ebendorf offer strikingly different narrative references. *Africa* pays homage to Scott's forebears through the image of seven African figures with brightly colored beads. *Off the Street, On the Beach* is a zany inventory of colorful plastic discards that Ebendorf and his daughter found on walks. A literal engagement drives Joan Parcher's *Graphite Pendulum-Pendant*. Echoing the surrealist's use of automatic writing and Jasper Johns's early works that documented corporeal motion, tracings from the pendant's graphite ball imprint the passage of time on the wearer's clothes.

Another tour-de-force—Gene Pijanowski and Hiroko Sato-Pijanowski's collaborative body ornament *Ooh! I Am Precious #21*—anchors the end of the show. Though not precious in a traditional sense, the undoubtedly difficult-to-wear piece bears the pomp and circumstance worthy of a royal sci-fi shoulder plate or a Japanese suit of armor. The show closes with some surprising uses of unusual materials, including Lonna Keller's *Flower*, a necklace of industrial rubber rings, and Robly A. Glover's *Fish Bait Necklace*. At once repugnant and sensual, the string of speckled-green silicone lures ironically places the wearer in the role of the pursued, while challenging conventional ideas of beauty.

With so many engaging examples, "Jewels & Gems" makes a compelling case for jewelry's transition from ornament to artwork, and reflects the wealth of cross-fertilization that is possible when traditional categories are blurred. Whether they are experienced by the full body or the fingertips alone, the works depict how a new sense of balance, harmony, and measure can be found in unorthodox materials and thinking.

Sarah Tanguy is an independent writer and curator living in Washington, D.C.

clockwise from lower left
Roberta Williamson
You're Perfect, 1998
sterling silver with found materials and objects
4 1/2 x 2 5/16 x 5/16"

Tina Fung Holder
Neckpiece 48.188, 1988
safety pins and glass beads on cotton thread
15 x 14 x 1/4"

Joan Parcher
Graphite Pendulum-Pendant, 1994
graphite, sterling silver, and stainless steel
13 1/2 x 8 1/2 x 1 1/2"

Joyce Scott
Africa, ca. 1980
glass beads and thread
14 1/2 x 10 x 1/2"

"IN THE DRAWER: A CLOSER LOOK AT A CONTEMPORARY NEW ZEALAND JEWELER"

AUCKLAND MUSEUM, NEW ZEALAND
FEBRUARY 5-MAY 19, 2004

by NICOLE JACQUARD

Kirsten Haydon has developed a unique methodology of working that draws inspiration from her personal family history yet also relies on the viewer's interaction along with his or her own personal notions of the souvenir, longing, and memories. Reinterpreting cherished memories, Haydon gives the viewer a glimpse into the life of her Poppa, George Ion, by revealing his personal experiences and revisiting his past from her own perspective. Haydon's grandfather, born in New Zealand, served and fought in World War II, a war that was a world apart from the southern hemisphere and his small island nation. His stories, along with her own family life, have shaped how this New Zealander interprets the world around her. For Haydon, her Poppa and his

mementos give her a language that she reinterprets into a universal story, one of identity, family, and memories.

Haydon's personal investigation into the past has been a way to look toward the future. Her most recent body of work allows the viewer to see a world of everyday objects transformed by the artist. Recurring themes throughout the work include the home, the role of the elderly in the community, and family stories that are passed down from generation to generation. Haydon works with a variety of materials, ranging from precious metals and enamel to mild steel, tin, fabrics, paper, and buttons. Each subtly expresses an important tactile quality, for these objects are created with the intention that they will be touched by the viewer.

Along white walls, labeled drawers protrude into the gallery space. Each set of drawers is draped with white gloves and a hand-printed book, some slightly ajar, others waiting patiently for the viewer to open and investigate their contents. It is the relation of all the pieces along with their installation and interaction with the audience that gives the work its presence.

Bridging the Po at first glance reveals small silver boats neatly arranged on a map that might suggest to the viewer a journey or perhaps an adventure. Contained within three drawers with the labels "reconstructing," "an image," "long past," these small rowboats tell a story as it was passed down to Haydon. Poppa and his infantry made bridges out of boats in order for vehicles to carry the wounded across the Po River in Italy.

Mosquitoes in the Landscape is displayed in three drawers. The labels "the machine," "in the landscape," "indicates a time," give the playful interpretation of airplane propellers that were once identified by a menacing buzz. Now these discarded parts rust in an open field.

Woven Stories is a collection of leaf-shaped tin boxes printed with images of leafs, maps, and photos from a specific time and place to give each tin its own story. Separately, the leaves are precious narratives in themselves. They are individual in character, but when arranged together form a wreath measuring over a meter wide.

The whitewashed glasshouse is life-size, measuring over two meters in height. It is a container holding scenes of landscapes and trips taken long ago. The photos are of particular importance for Haydon, but the archetypal images of the family trip at the beach are familiar to the viewer as well.

Haydon's work achieves the unexpected; it is not just a piece of jewelry, nor is it just a container. There is attention to every detail, from the initial collecting to the final installation. Materials are chosen for their tactile quality as well as their functionality. Her work conveys a sense of openness and the concern for her viewers, which is evident in the choice of universal symbols and their effective simplistic reinterpretation. Specific yet common at the same time, it is a unique combination.

Nicole Jacquard is a metalsmith who lived and studied in Melbourne, Australia from 2001-2004.

clockwise from top
Bridging the Po (detail), 2000
silver, steel, nylon
1 1/2 x 3/4 x 5/8" each

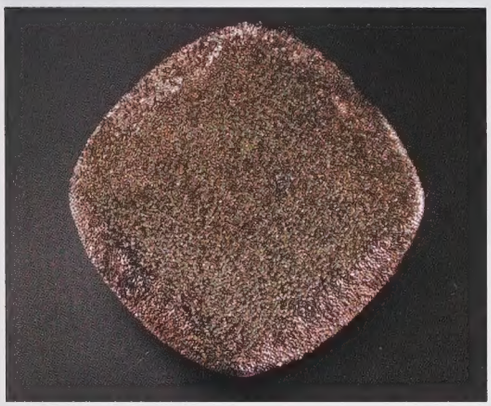
Woven Stories (detail), 2001
tinplate, transfer
various dimensions

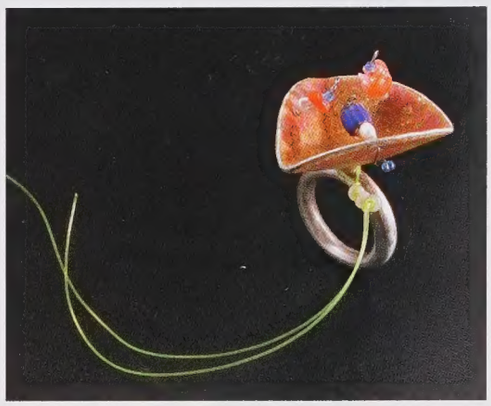
Installation view, "In the Drawer: A Closer Look at a Contemporary New Zealand Jeweler," Auckland Museum, New Zealand, 2004

"FIVE ENAMELISTS"

ORNAMENTUM GALLERY, HUDSON, NEW YORK
OCTOBER 9-NOVEMBER 10, 2003

by MARJORIE SIMON





High up on the Hudson, in a welcome addition to the outer edge of the northeast corridor, is Ornamentum Gallery, a sliver of a space opened just over a year ago by Laura Lapachin and Stefan Friedemann. Lapachin and Friedemann studied in Pforzheim, one of the two great jewelry centers in Germany, and they have brought their European aesthetic and connections to their gallery. Their select international group mixes styles and sensibilities, known and unknown names.

Despite a nearly forty-year career as a jeweler and teacher in Germany, and numerous awards, exhibitions, and museum collections in Europe, this is Sylke Klopsch's first American appearance. She is represented by a ring design often seen today in German-inspired work: a heavy gauge, round banded ring with a single top-heavy unit, in this case, a triangular ornament—like a three-cornered hat—accompanied by colorful flags in a careless and random attachment. Here the enamel and the metalworking are truly equivalent. The substantial ring supports the enameled element but is not dwarfed by it.

Jutta Klingebiel's miniature portraits go beyond recalling a bygone era of adornment; they conjure up an imaginary world. Not even one inch in diameter, these tiny solitary figures bezeled in gold are painted in the style of nineteenth-century miniature lockets, compacts, snuffboxes, or charms of Limoges enamel or paintings on ivory. They reference women's miniatures in their subject matter and scale, a single portrait, often in profile, with a velvety black background. It's impossible not to make up stories about who these people are. But they exist only in Klingebiel's imagination. The portraits appear individualized, not generic, and their presentation—round, in simple gold bezels—seems timeless, not antiquated. Klingebiel's fine drawing skills are matched by her control of the medium, with enamel's classical satiny finish achieved by lengthy and careful stoning and firing.

Hye-Young Suh is the latest enamelist in the Maria Phillips camp of electroformed organic forms, a formal vocabulary drawn from the sea. A segmented necklace appears to be a family of marine creatures waving to capture unwary plankton, with lacy anemones dripping paint, implying movement and oceanic vitality. The few pieces shown here seem to belong to more than one time frame. Not all are equally successful and the newest work seems unresolved.

Joan Parcher is a consistently provocative presence in American jewelry. Over the years she has explored permanence and ephemera through materials, specifically graphite and mica. She has also created perhaps the most-copied production earrings extant, the five-petal enameled flower blossom. Her contribution here is small in number only. The large brooches are raw and black, with surfaces like marcasite or volcanic sand, tarry and glittering at the same time. In their confrontational posture they recall the earlier graphite work and reflect her confidence with enamel as a material of the future as well as the past, of primitive grit as well as serene beauty. Like Johan van Aswegen, who also has used sand in enamel, Parcher connects the raw material of glass with culturally-laden objects of ornamentation, in this case the diamond brooch.

Heinz Brummel continues the vocabulary he has established in geometric shapes, primary colors, clean construction, and sandblasted surface patterns. Brummel is probably the most whimsical practitioner of cloisonné around with his constructivist arrangements of line and color. Skeletal frames reveal the beautiful counter enamel, whose design has received the same care as the front. Attachments and findings are always clean and often clever. Given the level of attention of which he is capable, one wishes Brummel were not constrained by the marketplace, where there is little room for risk-taking.

One of the special challenges of enamel is that once fired, it generally cannot be soldered, nor does it flow over solder. For this reason, enameled elements are often simply bezeled, but Brummel and Parcher have come up with some ingenious attachments. Brummel creates a frame with tabs or prongs, leaving the back open. Parcher slid a silver plate, with the pin stem already soldered on, over loops attached directly to the back of the enameled piece; jump rings dropped through the loops hold back and front together. As if to obviate the entire problem, Suh leaves her elements raw.

Marjorie Simon is a metalsmith and writer based in New Jersey.

clockwise from top
Jutta Klingebiel
Earrings, 2003
enamel, gold
5/8" diameter

Sylke Klopsch
Ring, 2002
sterling silver, enamel, mixed media
1 1/2 x 1 1/8 x 1"

Heinz Brummel
Abstract Head (brooch/pendant), 2001
cloisonné enamel, sterling silver
1 1/2 x 1/2"

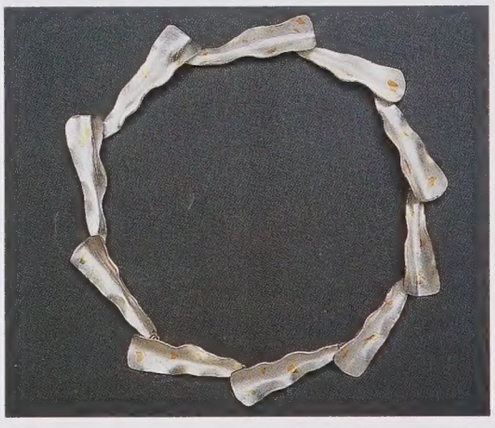
Joan Parcher
Folded Circle Brooch, 2003
fused glass and enamel on copper, oxydized sterling
3" diameter

REVIEWS

"THREE JEWELERS: RIKA MOUW/ JO PEDERSEN/ TURID SENUNGETUK"

ANCHORAGE MUSEUM OF HISTORY & ART, ALASKA
NOVEMBER 23, 2003-JANUARY 4, 2004

by SANDY GILLESPIE



What stands out most in this compelling exhibition of three Alaskan jewelers are the nuanced layers of technique and passion, whimsy and elegance. The jewelry of each artist is precise and distinctive, and each body of work adds a unique voice to an ongoing dialogue with this place called Alaska.

Turid Senungetuk lives in Homer, on the southern tip of the Kenai Peninsula, surrounded by the sea. The necklaces, bracelets, and pins on view are of sterling silver, with accents of 24k gold flecks and bars that create a sensation of aquatic movement—the sway of kelp or the floating drift of jellyfish. Rolled edges suggest the swell of inlet tides. In a necklace of elongated triangles, the graceful elements circle like a school of silver fish. Senungetuk's jewelry has been widely exhibited throughout Alaska since 1975, and her elegant works have found a wide base of enthusiastic collectors.

Jo Pedersen also works in silver and gold, with the addition of precious stones. She is known for her use of the keum-bo technique of bonding 24k gold to sterling silver with heat and pressure, diffusing the molecules between the two metals to form a permanent bond. Pedersen's creations are one-of-a-kind, with gems as diverse as diamonds, pearls, and opals adding depth and surprise to her refined creations. In addition to jewelry, Pedersen presented intricate boxes. Pedersen's juxtaposition of unexpected angles and curves lends an element of playfulness to her vision. Contrasts in smooth, cold metal with warmer shades of individual stones and varied surface treatments echo the extremes of light and dark, ice and heat of interior Alaska, where Pedersen lives.

Rika Mouw is a jeweler of another color. She enlists silver, gold, and copper as settings for the red fireweed, ochre sea urchin, and white coral she collects and uses as her media. Mouw lives on Kachemak Bay in Homer, and creates art to voice her love for and commitment to the natural world. Her *Fireweed Leaf Necklace* is made with real fireweed leaves she picked in the fall, after they turned scarlet. Each leaf is bordered with copper or 14k gold wire and then wrapped in hog gut. The leaves are then strung on a spiraled wire of 14k gold. Fireweed can grow taller than a person; it is the first plant to reappear after a fire, when its vibrant pink blossoms create a carpet beneath blackened trees. In this piece, fireweed is a symbol of regeneration and the necklace embodies hope. Mouw's *Mussel Shell Necklace*, made of approximately 400 blue mussel shells gathered from the beach in front of her house, is both jewelry and sculpture. She removed the blue layer of each shell to reveal the nacreous layer underneath. The shells are shaped, stabilized, and strung on spiraled silver wire, then finished with a sterling silver clasp of mussel shell shapes. The necklace has both heft—the weight of so many shells—and lightness—the luminescence of the material itself and the space in the center for the wearer to occupy. Mouw also included boxes in the show. Her "Wetland Box Series" is transformative, the lid of each sterling silver box is removable and serves a second function as a unique piece of jewelry. The boxes, which hold wetland plant specimens, are sculpture as well as decoration. Another series, "Commitment Rings," features life forms gathered from Kachemak Bay—limpet, urchin, mussel, and agates set in sterling silver and 22k gold. One ring is a stone that is held in place by the wearer's finger. Mouw's works are startling in their simple, exquisite beauty. A closer look compels the viewer to recognize both the grandeur and fragility of the physical world.

Senungetuk, Pedersen, and Mouw know one another; in this vast northern landscape, artists are outnumbered by moose and bear, eagle and raven. Appreciation for different approaches and camaraderie between colleagues define the arts communities, which are numerous. The three jewelers in this exhibit are known individually far beyond the borders of Alaska, and it was a pleasure to see their works together in one space.

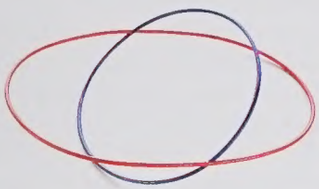
Sandy Gillespie is an Anchorage-based painter and visual arts program director for the Alaska State Council on the Arts.

clockwise from top
Rika Mouw
Mussel Shell Necklace, 2003
blue mussel shells, sterling silver
9 x 9"
Photo: Chris Arend

Turid Senungetuk
Necklace, 2003
sterling silver, 24k gold
17" long
Photo: Chris Arend

Jo Pedersen
Memoir I (brooch), 2003
sterling silver with 24k gold keum-bo
2 3/4"
Photo: Ken Kollodge

de B.O.E. is een groep van 4 edelsmeden
en 1 beeldhouwer, die door een meer
persoonlijke presentatie van het werk
- met daarbij de noodzakelijke informatie -
de normale wijze van exposeren willen
verruimen tot een manifestatie van ideeën.
the B.O.E. is a group composed of
4 jewellery makers and 1 sculptor which
wants to expand the normal way of exhibiting
into a demonstration of ideas through a
more personal presentation of their work
and of the necessary information.



"BEYOND ORNAMENT: CONTEMPORARY JEWELRY FROM THE HELEN WILLIAMS DRUTT COLLECTION"

MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS, HOUSTON
PART ONE: AUGUST 16, 2003-
FEBRUARY 29, 2004
PART TWO: MARCH 6-JUNE 27, 2004

by DIANE FALKENHAGEN

The 120 pieces in "Beyond Ornament" were chosen from the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston's extensive Helen Williams Drutt collection of contemporary studio jewelry. It was the museum's first opportunity to introduce work from the renowned international collection it acquired last year.

The premise of the exhibition, like the collection, was summed up by its title. "Beyond Ornament" presented five decades of avant-garde work that redefined jewelry by challenging established conventions about content, materials, wearability, and preciousness. According to Cindi Strauss, Curator of Modern and Contemporary Decorative Arts and Design at the MFAH, the exhibition closely paralleled the international character of a collection that is comprised of more than 626 pieces created between 1963 and 2001 by 157 artists from 17 countries.

Each installment of the two-part exhibition offered viewers definitive works from a broad range of genres, generations, and cultures. Part One corresponded to the decades of the 1960s through 1980s and included seminal works by artists who helped launch what we now call the "new jewelry" movement.

Embodying the 1970s trend toward large-scale sculptural jewelry in America was the dynamic form of Albert Paley's articulated silver neckpiece, which greeted viewers near the gallery entrance. Elegant despite its scale and mechanical nature, it expressed graceful movement even in its static, off-the-body state. Nearby were Gary Griffin's oversized *Collar in Progression Base*, and Stanley Lechtzin's electroformed silver and polyester resin neckpiece, *Torque 22-D*—both iconic pieces that embraced the industrial aesthetic of the 1970s by utilizing technology and materials that were then new to the art jeweler.

Examples of sleek European Modernism were abundant in the work of the late Dutch artist, Emmy van Leersum. Her sophisticated bracelets, neckpiece, and earrings from the early to mid-1980s offered a stark contrast to the fluid styles and technical virtuosity exemplified in the forms of Lechtzin and Paley. Van Leersum's minimalist aesthetic and affinity for experimental materials influenced much of contemporary Dutch jewelry design.

Claus Bury's precise graphic brooches differed vastly in style from the narrative and surreal jewelry forms of fellow German Manfred Bischoff. However, the works of both artists were accompanied by renderings intended to be integral backdrops to the jewelry itself.

The only other non-wearable object in the show was by members of a 1970s revolutionary group of Dutch jewelers called B.O.E., or Bond van Oproerige Edelsmeden (League of Rebellious Goldsmiths). The collaborative piece by the late Marion Herbst and other group members was a roughly-finished plywood box about 16 inches square, with four equal compartments containing small assemblages of drawings, photos, and objects with ambiguous meanings. Text on the box's lid attempted but failed to clearly communicate the group's conceptualist intent.

Other notable works in the Part One installment were by Georg Dobler, Hermann Jünger, Bruno Martinazzi, Falko Marx, Wendy Ramshaw, Bernhard Schobinger, the late Olaf Skoogfors, and David Watkins.

Part Two overlapped chronologically with Part One, but primarily encompassed the 1980s to the present decade. Intellectualism was at its best in Otto Künzli's ironic rubber and gold bracelet, which raises questions about material worth. The simple bracelet—a round hoop with a bulging spherical form—appears to be of solid rubber. The description of the work, however, states that it is made of rubber and gold. This leaves the unknowing viewer to ponder exactly what hidden part of the bracelet *is* of gold. Whatever the answer, the importance of the gold is not its form or the quality of preciousness it brings to the piece, but its disparity from the rubber and the subversive message the artist sends by choosing not to expose it.

Other than Bischoff's work, there were only isolated pieces that would fit comfortably into the narrative or figurative realm. The most intriguing example of personal symbolism was seen in Bruce Metcalf's 1996 *Wood Pin #132*. Like a miniature sculpture, the eccentric mixed-media work consists of a figurative brooch standing on a cubical base. The brooch—a comic figure with a disproportionately large fruit-like head and a tiny penis—holds a carpenter's hammer in one hand, and contemplates the seed or fruit pit in its other hand. The message is not without ambiguity, but could it be a capricious comment on the conflicting human forces of self-perpetuation and self-destruction?

Some of the other artists represented in Part Two were Giampaolo Babetto, Gijs Bakker, Peter Chang, Arline Fisch, Lisa Gralnick, Nel Linssen, Pavel Opočenský, and Tone Vigeland, among others.

The beautiful installations, with their thoughtful juxtaposition of pieces, raised viewers' awareness of subtle relationships, while informative text panels briefly spoke to the categorical trends and crosscurrents running throughout the diverse body of work. For those familiar with the history of the international studio jewelry movement and leading survey publications such as *Jewelry of Our Time*, by Helen Drutt and Peter Dormer,[1] the exhibition offered no real surprises. However, for the mainstream museumgoer with little or no knowledge of art jewelry, the exhibition was a great introduction to the concept that jewelry can be as much about ideas as it is about ornamentation.

[1] Helen W. Drutt English and Peter Dormer, *Jewelry of Our Time–Art, Ornament and Obsession* (New York: Rizzoli International Publications, Inc., 1995).

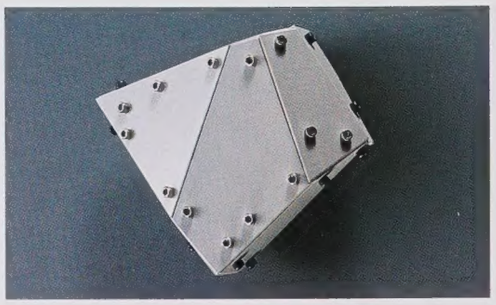
Diane Falkenhagen is a metalsmith whose residence and studio are located on West Galveston Island, Texas.

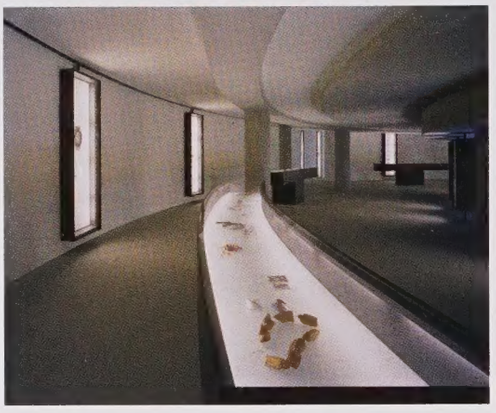
clockwise from lower left
Emmy van Leersum
Armpiece, 1982
steel, paint
1 x 2 11/16"

Bruce Metcalf
Wood Pin #132, 1996
maple, brass, copper, micarta, 23k gold leaf
5 x 2 1/2"

Marion Herbst, in collaboration with Onno Boekhoudt, Françoise van den Bosch, Karel Niehorster, Berend Peter
Bond van Oproerige Edelsmeden (League of Rebellious Goldsmiths) Box, 1974
plywood, paper, string, metal
16 11/16 x 16 5/8 x 2 5/8"

Albert Paley
Necklace, 1974
sterling silver, ivory, copper alloy, garnet, amethyst
1 1/2 x 27"





"JEWELRY: THE DANNER-ROTUNDA"

PINAKOTHEK DER MODERNE, MUNICH
MARCH 5, 2004-FALL 2005

by URSULA ILSE NEUMAN

"So many jewelry lovers in one place!" These words were uttered in mild astonishment by Hermann Jünger, Germany's revered pioneer of art jewelry, at the opening of the Danner-Rotunda in the stunning Pinakothek der Moderne in Munich. The Rotunda completes the plan for the Pinakothek der Moderne, which opened in 2002. With the opening of the Rotunda, jewelry by international artists can now be seen alongside the Pinakothek der Moderne's permanent collection of painting and sculpture, architecture, graphic arts, and twentieth-century design. The decision by a major European museum to focus on these areas of artistic expression makes a strong statement about the importance of post-war art jewelry and strengthens Munich's position as a center for this art form.

The elbow-to-elbow gathering of 2,200 jewelry devotees and museum enthusiasts on opening night was presided over by museum director Dr. Florian Hufnagl. Dr. Hufnagl, the respected author of several books on contemporary jewelry, proudly announced that with the completion of the Rotunda more than 300 pieces of jewelry from the Danner-Stiftung collection will be presented in a setting commensurate with their innovation and virtuosity.

The 4,300 sq. ft Rotunda is located, like a hidden treasury, at the inner core of the Pinakothek der Moderne. To soften the vault-like setting, well-lit floor-to-ceiling display cases are spaced along the circular walls. They are complemented by unadorned, curving floor cases that are lit from beneath to allow comfortable close-up viewing. Columns at the center of the Rotunda subtly allude to the neoclassical spirit of Munich's historical buildings and its star architect Leo von Klenze.

This new forum for international contemporary jewelry was a joint effort of the Neue Sammlung (State Museum of Applied Art and Design) and the Danner-Stiftung (Danner Foundation for Applied Arts) in Munich. Founded in 1920 by Therese and Benno Danner to support Bavarian crafts, the Danner-Stiftung maintained a strong interest in the art of gold- and silversmithing thanks to one of its founding members, the noted Bavarian goldsmith Dr. Karl Rothmüller. In 1980, the Danner-Stiftung shifted its focus to art jewelry, establishing an enviable international collection that it presented to the Neue Sammlung on permanent loan in 1999 in order to make the collection available to the public. Selected works from this collection will now be on permanent view in the Danner-Rotunda, supplemented by important contributions from other donors, including the avant-garde jewelry collections of Peter Skubic and works donated by the Galerie Spektrum, Munich.

The Danner collection chronicles the evolution of post-war one-of-a-kind art jewelry. While this is accomplished principally through German work, examples from the Netherlands, Italy, Great Britain, and Austria, as well as from the Czech Republic, Sweden, Denmark, Norway, and Spain, are also included in the collection, as are a number of strong pieces from Japan, Australia, and New Zealand. The contributions of American artists, however, need to be reflected more fully if the Danner is to fulfill its mission of documenting the evolution of contemporary jewelry. The collection features work by such prominent American artists as Alexander Calder, Margaret de Patta, Harry Bertoia, Arline Fisch, Robert Ebendorf, and Thomas Gentille; yet a number of significant trends in American jewelry, for example the prevalence of narrative content, remain undocumented in the Danner's account of contemporary developments, as do the contributions of contemporary Native American jewelry artists.

The 134 works featured in the Danner's opening exhibition were chosen by the eminent guest curators Hermann Jünger and Otto Künzli, who have exerted a major influence on contemporary jewelry as artists and teachers at the Munich Academy of Fine Arts. In addition to their own works, more than 20 of their students, representing two generations of artists, are included in the exhibition, among them such well-known jewelers as Daniel Kruger, Therese Hilbert, Helen Britton, and Mari Ishikawa.

In designing the premiere exhibition, Jünger and Künzli chose to display the selected contemporary works together with historical and ethnic jewelry from various Munich museums. This context unites works across temporal and geographic boundaries, spotlighting intriguing visual parallels from diverse cultures and regions. Information on the objects in the exhibition is printed on thin, newspaper-size sheets of paper that are arranged on the floor in tall stacks so that visitors can help themselves, a creative touch recalling the take-away pages of conceptual artist Felix Gonzalez Torres.

The Pinakothek der Moderne's bold decision to present contemporary jewelry in the broader context of contemporary painting, sculpture, and the best in twentieth-century design places it in the vanguard of museums that are reassessing traditional thinking about art, craft, and design in response to current developments in the arts. Taking contemporary artists' jewelry more seriously and presenting it prominently is something that other museums would do well to consider.

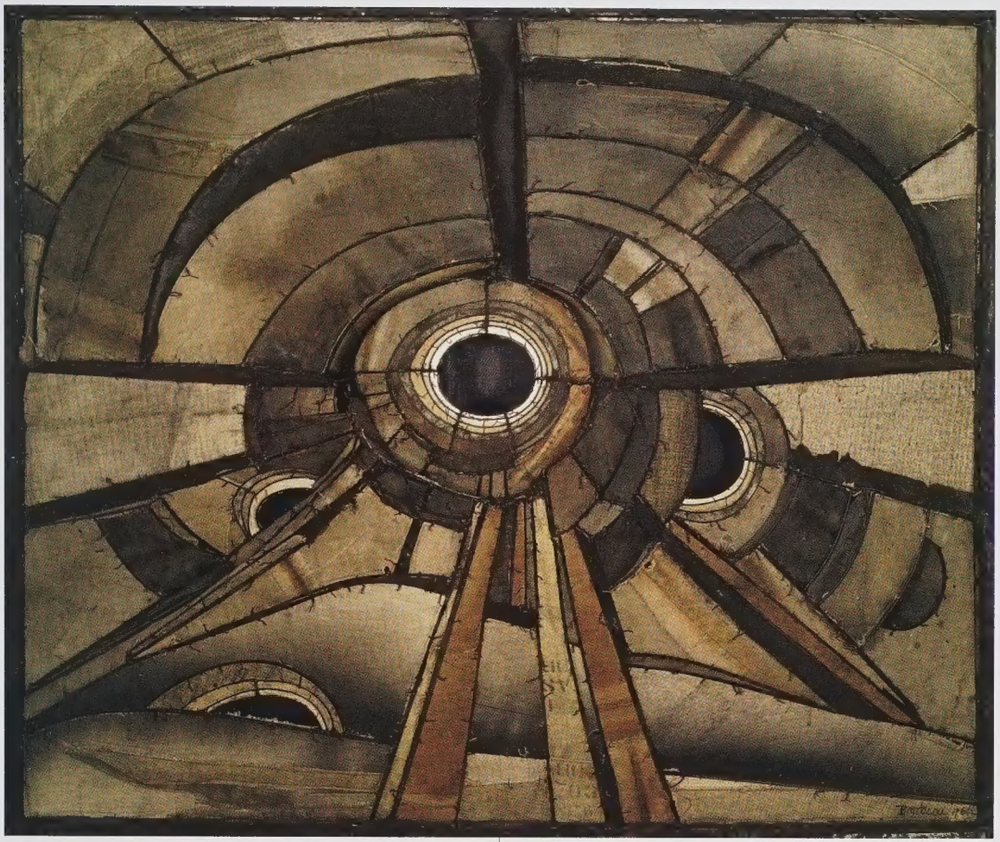
Ursula Ilse Neuman is curator at the Museum of Arts & Design, New York.

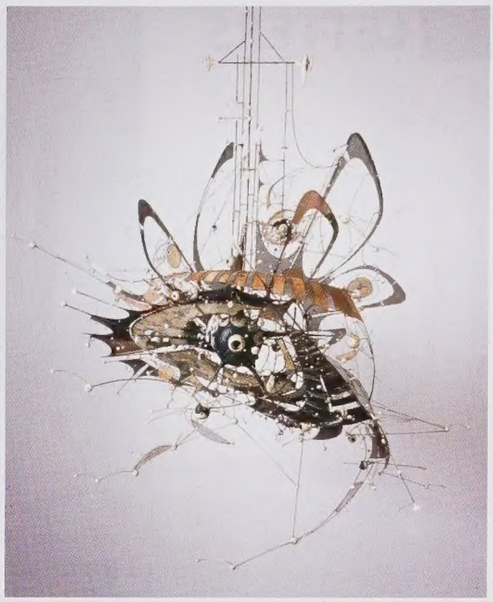
clockwise from lower left
Robert Ebendorf
Brooches, 1990
mixed media
3 x 2 1/2"; 4 x 3 1/4"
Photo: Bobby Hansson

Thomas Gentille
Brooch, 1999
blackened steel, stainless steel, Color Core over maple
3 x 2 x 1 1/2"
Photo: Alexandra Laurenzo

Bernhard Schobinger
Bottleneck Necklace, 1988
12 broken bottlenecks, cord
16" diameter
Photo: George Meister

View of the Danner-Rotunda, 2004
Landau und Kindelbacher, architects;
Lene Jünger, designer
Photo: Stefan Mueller-Naumann



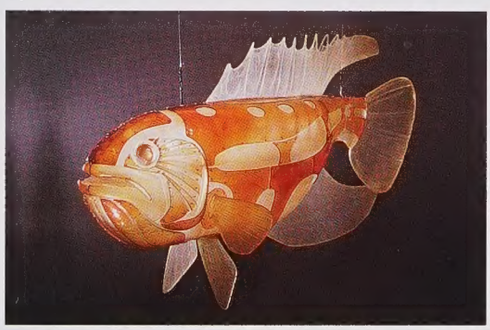


"LEE BONTECOU"

MUSEUM OF CONTEMPORARY ART, CHICAGO
FEBRUARY 14–MAY 30, 2004

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART, NEW YORK
JULY 28–SEPTEMBER 27, 2004

by JAMES YOOD



This exhibition turned out to be one of the surprise successes of the season, both in its initial showing in Los Angeles and in Chicago. This warm embrace of Lee Bontecou has a bit of that "whatever happened to" nostalgia, the sense that she is a forgotten master with whom we've lost touch since the 1960s, and are now pleasantly surprised to find has been working (even if in some isolation) all the decades since. (Some of the hype, not Bontecou's fault of course, is a bit much—I just received a press release from the museum informing me that "Brad Pitt, Donna Karan, Michael Caine, Drew Barrymore, and David Bowie have all visited the show," a curious argument that the merits of an exhibition can depend on the celebrity of its visitors.)

Well, what did Brad Pitt see? I can't speak for him, but if he was attentive he saw an exhibition that did great justice to the key years of Bontecou's career, from 1959 to 1967; traced what seems a crisis period in her vision from 1967 to 1970; glossed over a period from around 1970-1986, and focused securely on the work of the last 15 years or so. There can't be much question about the significance of the work of the early and mid-1960s; her large wall reliefs of welded metal armatures with a patchwork of raw brownish canvas-like material stitched over it, usually with one or more large yawning black apertures in its midst, are a kind of American arte povera, stark and extremely effective. Bontecou makes a sort of wound in her early work, a naked void that reflects 1950s existentialism—this is Cold War art, communicating a sense that doom is inevitable, that despair and darkness are somehow natural states of being. And they work—these wall sculptures with their battered and scumbled surfaces and twisty bits of raw metal are magnificently dreary, a naming of the unnamable, a site of psychic horror, the dark hole replacing the dark wood as our deepest primal fear.

But six or seven years of gazing into the hollow and emptied void seemed enough for Bontecou. As the 1960s advanced her use of this format became more and more decorative, if that can be believed, and surprisingly elegant and casual. And then came the period of crisis. Sometime in 1967, Bontecou switched materials, from metal armature/stretched raw canvas, to vacuum-formed plastic. She switched subject matter as well, from some of the most powerful expressions of agony and fear in modern art, to big plastic flowers and bulbous plastic fish suspended from the ceiling; the latter are some of the least interesting sculpture I have ever seen hanging in a major American art museum. What a falling off! Sometimes exhausting a body of thought leaves one imaginatively drained, and Bontecou's years of great intensity seem followed by a loss of way. The 1970s are conspicuous by their near absence in this retrospective; Bontecou either stopped working, or, I suspect, created work too marginal to be presented in this context. While continuing to teach at Brooklyn College, Bontecou eventually relocated to rural Pennsylvania, and more or less dropped out of the contemporary art world.

But thank heaven for third and fourth acts. In the mid-1980s Bontecou—who by the way, always drew superbly, the works on paper from beginning to end are a highlight of the exhibition—began a resurrection that lets this retrospective end on a positive note. Tabletop sculpture that is intense and complex, little conglomerations of welded steel, porcelain, wire mesh, etc. come together to suggest sci-fi insects, odd space ships, etc. They are concentrated, taut, and visually absorbing. In recent years these have left the pedestal and have become free-hanging, large starburst explosions of glossy porcelain and wire that mix bold silhouettes with a lot of fussy detail that has them function on both the micro- and the macrocosm. An expansive kind of New Age sensibility—always an undercurrent in Bontecou's work—that sense of cosmic forces wildly spinning around, seems to have replaced the Cold War demons that once motivated her. Her accomplishment in both arenas seems secure, and, as more retrospectives should, this one chronicled a journey not of ceaseless triumph and unabated authority, but one that has been variegated and uneven, and for that precise reason with much of compelling interest along the way.

James Yood teaches art history at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago.

clockwise from top left
Untitled, 1960
welded steel and canvas and wire
43 1/2 x 51 1/2 x 12"

Untitled, 1980-1998
welded steel, porcelain, wire mesh, canvas, wire
7 x 8 x 6'

Untitled, 1970
vacuum-formed plastic
30 x 57 x 21"

LETTERS

TO THE EDITOR:

I recently received the summer 2004 issue and frankly I was disturbed by what I saw. I found the two letters attacking artist Keith Lewis for his subject matter and *Metalsmith* for publishing Lewis's works absurd. The opinions of Mr. David and Mrs. Westman are no more or less valid than my own, however I do feel they have missed the point completely on Lewis's work. Rather than looking at the man and mind that created the pieces featured, they isolated body parts and transformed them from expression to pornography.

My choice of subject matter in my work is far from Mr. Lewis's, and I cannot say I loved all that was featured in *Metalsmith*, but I found several of his pieces to be moving and provocative. Attention to detail, form, and craftsmanship was not only apparent, but impeccable. If we cannot view art in an art magazine with open minds, where can it be viewed?

An ageless debate in the world of metal art objects has been the division of Art vs. Craft. I feel that the letters to the editor regarding Keith Lewis's artwork have made that division quite clear, a profound lack of respect for others' views and expression.

Metalsmith should not cower to a minority who suggest that provocative and daring metal art be censored, carry a warning sign, or be taboo in the hands of a child.

Hold your head high and keep pushing the envelope.

Dan Connelly
Elburn, Illinois

TO THE EDITOR:

I just read Susan Kingsley's article, "The Price of Gold," and want to commend you for this most insightful piece. I have struggled with this issue for years and have sought to use other materials because of it. I know the story of gold extraction is an ugly one, but I didn't know it to the extent that I do now. My feelings towards this dilemma are heightened as a result of reading this article and my work will have greater perspective. The fact that it was published in *Metalsmith* magazine is very, very powerful. I thank you from the very core of my being.

Rika Mouw
Homer, Alaska

TO THE EDITOR:

Susan Kingsley's article, "The Price of Gold," in the summer issue was just phenomenal. It should be required reading for all metalsmiths. I was impressed that you had the courage to expose this shocking evil to our readers and members, rather than sweep it under the rug as many of us continue to do. It is a pleasure to remind our graying "goldsmiths" (myself included) that there is a reason we seek alternative materials. I am proud to be a part of an organization that welcomes all developing facets of our history-laden, traditional vocation: from political and erotic jewelry to alternative materials and processes to new ways of adapting our noble skills to the changing times. May that article make all "smiths of the precious" think more deeply about the material they relish and ask: "Is it really worth it?" and, "Can I make beauty with something less damaging?"

Boris Bally
Providence, Rhode Island

TO THE EDITOR:

I noticed a technical error in the Daniel Jocz Studio Visit article in the summer 2004 issue. J. E. Paterak states that "Aluminum is a contaminant to silver/goldsmithing studios and it was my job, as the studio tech, to boot him [Jocz] out." Unlike other low melting-temperature white metals (lead, tin, zinc), aluminum does not alloy easily with gold, silver, and copper. The other white metals will alloy into silver and gold at annealing/soldering temperatures and thus are contaminants in the studio. One can place a snip of aluminum on a sheet of silver or gold and heat the sheet to a bright, glowing red. The molten aluminum will not alloy in and when the silver has cooled down, the aluminum will pop off like a burnt egg off of teflon. I hope that Mr. Jocz and other aluminumsmiths will be allowed to come in from the cold.

Rod McCormick
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

ERRATUM:

Toni Greenbaum wishes to amend a point in her book review of *Art Jewelry Today* in the summer 2004 issue. The "thermometer" earrings attributed to Meret Oppenheim were, in fact, worn by Mina Loy in a 1918 photographic portrait by Man Ray.

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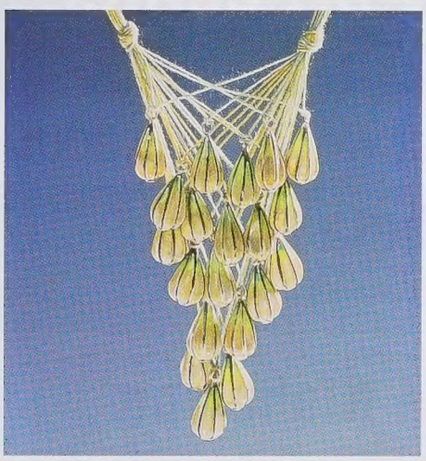
by Dana Singer



SNAG Awards 2004 Educational Endowment Scholarships

The Educational Endowment Scholarship is SNAG's highest award offered to students, both graduate and undergraduate. The 2004 scholarship recipients are Megan Auman and Kim Lucci-Elbualy, graduate recipients, and Tzu-Ju Chen, undergraduate recipient. Megan Auman is a first-year graduate at Kent State University, and Kim Lucci-Elbualy is a second-year graduate student at Kent State University. Tzu-Ju Chen completed her undergraduate degree at the Rhode Island School of Design.

The jurors, Donald Friedlich, Lucinda Brogden, and Rachelle Thiewes, also awarded four Honorable Mentions to Frankie Flood, graduate, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign; Hye-young Suh, graduate, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign; Christine Bossler, undergraduate, Wayne State University; and Swan Kim, undergraduate, Rhode Island School of Design.

SNAG Awards 2004 Minority Student Grants

The SNAG Minority Student Grant is designed to encourage the continued contributions of racial and ethnic minorities in the metals field. The two 2004 grants have been awarded to Melissa Burrell, a graduate student at the Rhode Island School of Design, and Swan Kim, undergraduate, also at RISD. The jurors this year for the grants were educators Christine Clark, Lane Coulter, and Christina Smith.

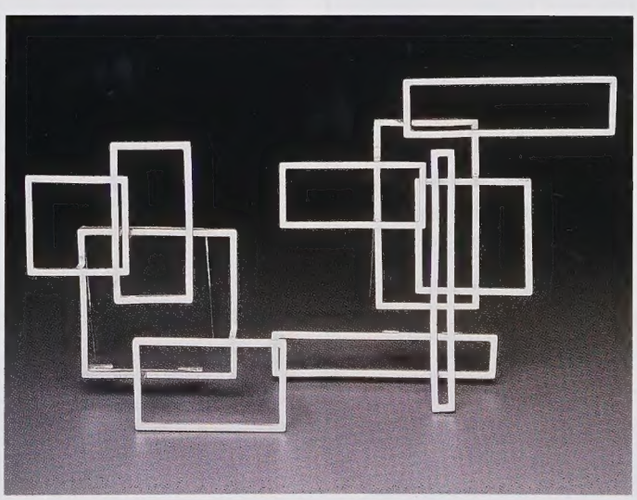
SNAG Welcomes New Members to Board of Directors

Three new members were elected to the SNAG Board of Directors at our conference in St. Petersburg earlier this year: John Cogswell (studio goldsmith, silversmith, and educator), Kiwon Wang (studio jeweler), and president-elect Sam Shaw (studio jeweler, designer). In addition, Susan Mahlstedt (studio jeweler) was appointed to fill a two-year board vacancy, and Barbara Minor (studio jeweler, enamellist) accepted a new two-year appointment after having filled a board vacancy for the past year. SNAG sincerely thanks outgoing board members Kristin Beeler and Marcia Macdonald for all their hard work and dedication.

SNAG and *Metalsmith* Partner with the Ganoksin Project

SNAG and Ganoksin have come together to offer critical reviews and articles from *Metalsmith* through the Ganoksin Project website, at www.ganoksin.com. The Ganoksin Project is the largest virtual information source for searchable archived content specific to jewelry and metals. The addition of content from *Metalsmith* will further expand the already diverse library collection housed on the site.

Dana Singer is executive director of SNAG.



top to bottom

Kim Lucci-Elbualy
Safe Inside the Storm, 2003
copper, enamel
13 x 8 1/2"

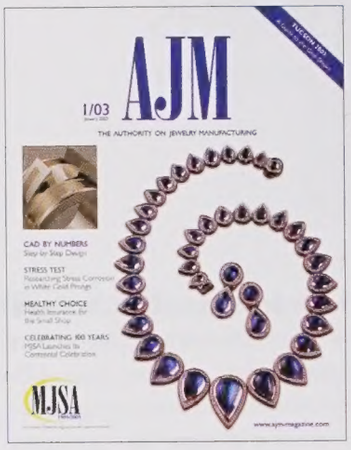
Megan Auman
Poppies!, 2003
balloons, copper
4 x 8 x 8"

Tzu-Ju Chen
Untitled, 2000
plique-à-jour enamel, plastic tubes
length 15"

Swan Kim
Pill Talisman, 2003
fine silver and found objects
2 x 3/4 x 3/4"

Melissa Burrell
Open Squares Brooch, 2003
silver
6 1/2 x 2 1/2 x 1/2"

Expert Technical Advice[3]



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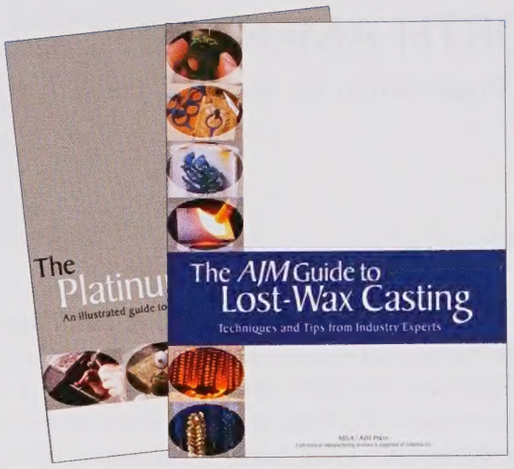

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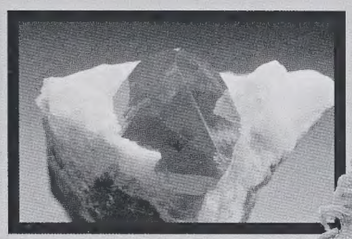

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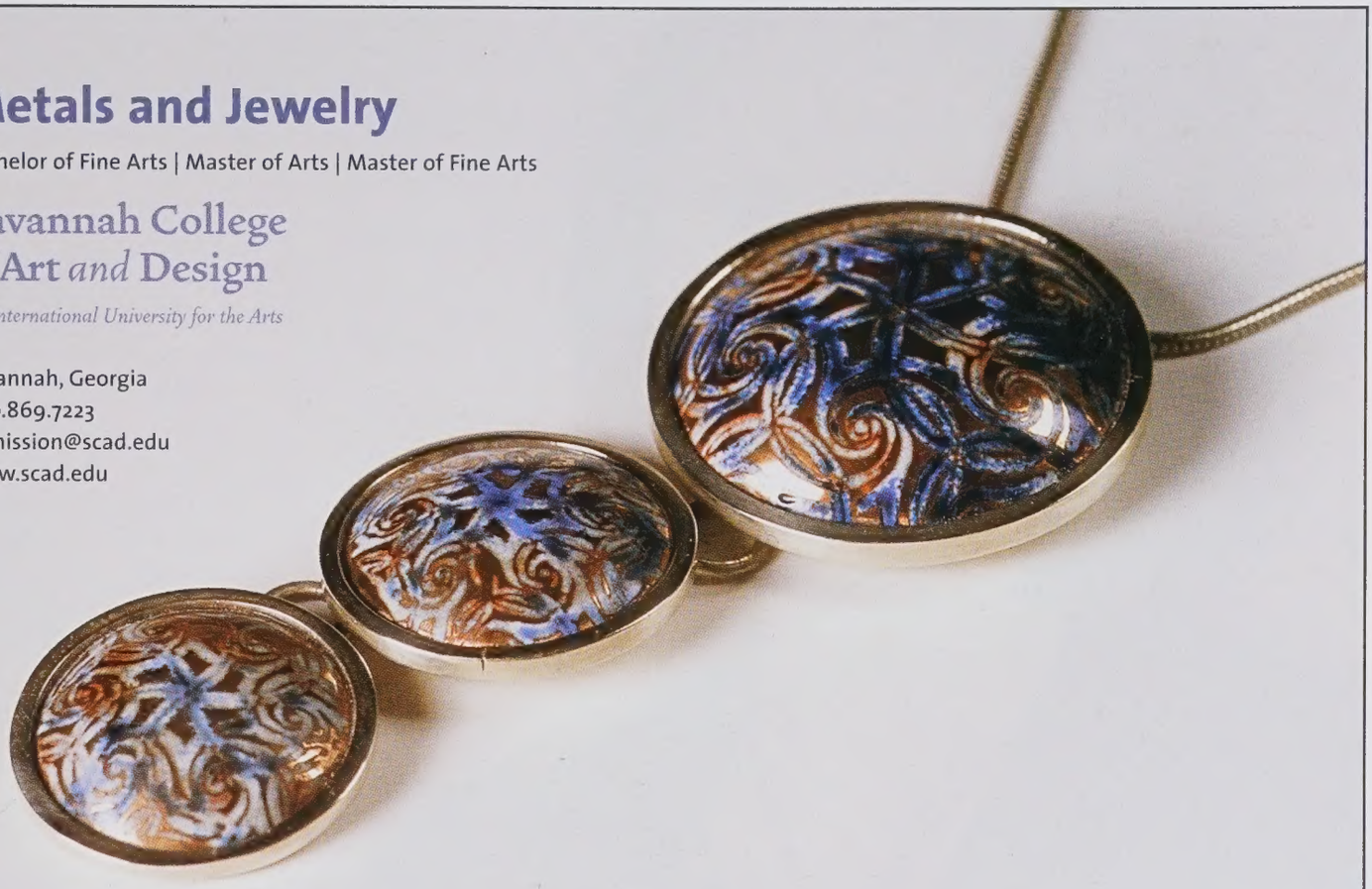

Christy Mitchell, Auburn, Ala., *Untitled,* copper, sterling silver, enamel

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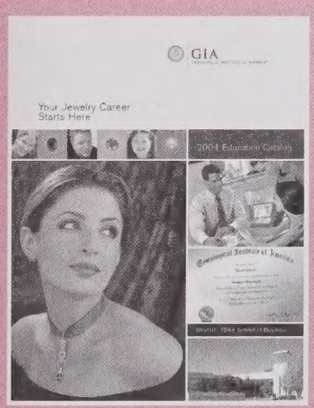

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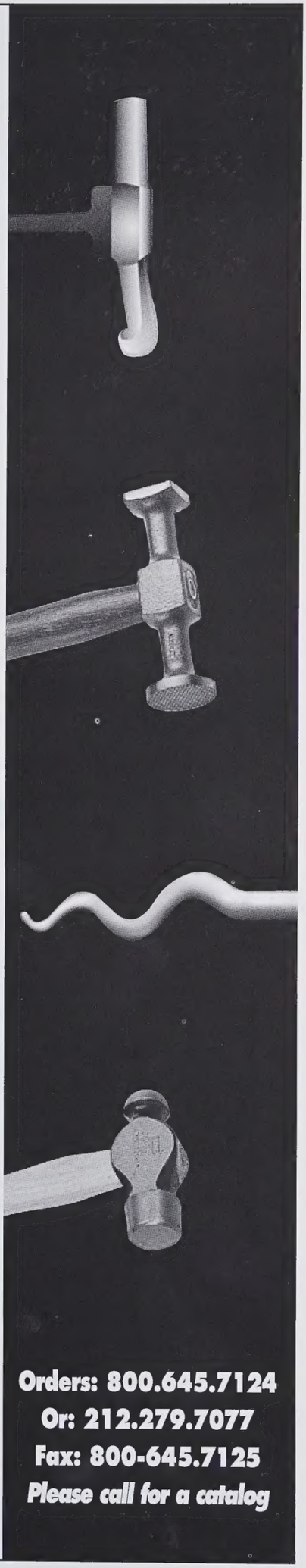

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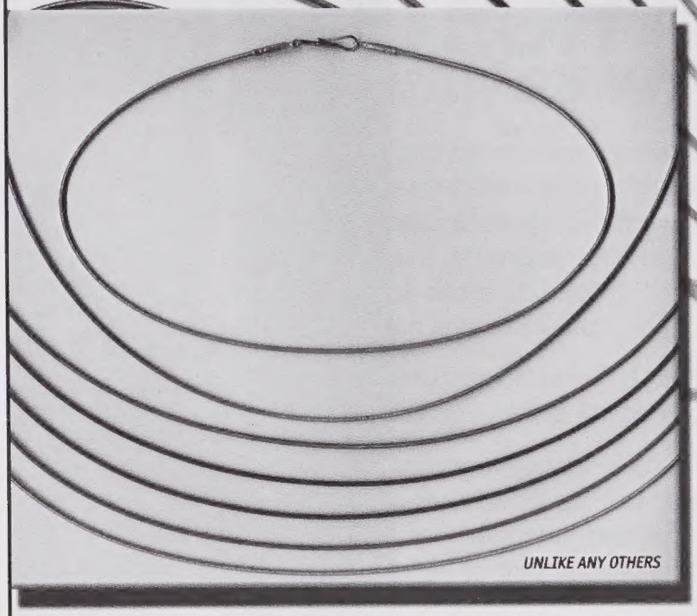

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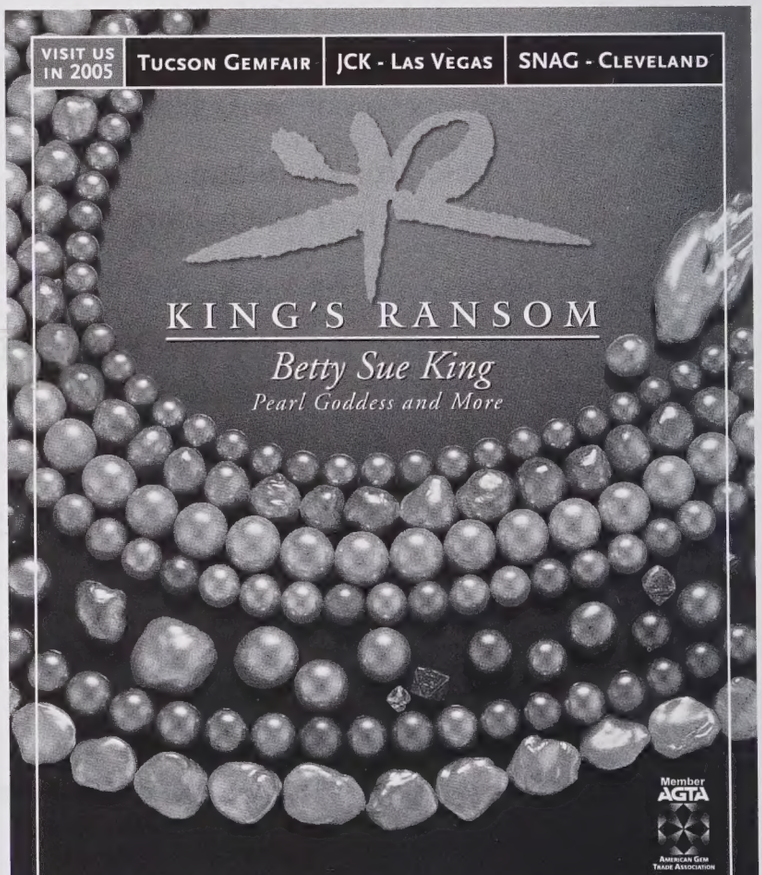

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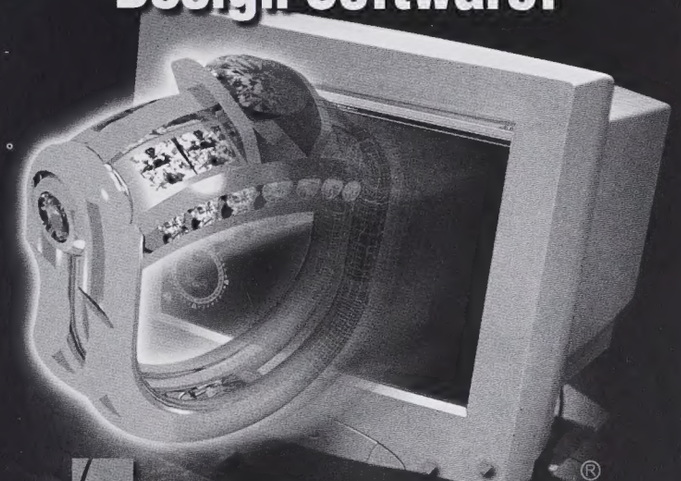

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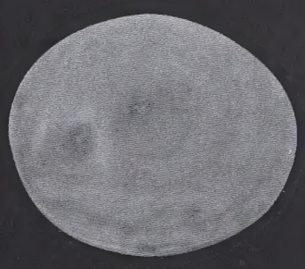

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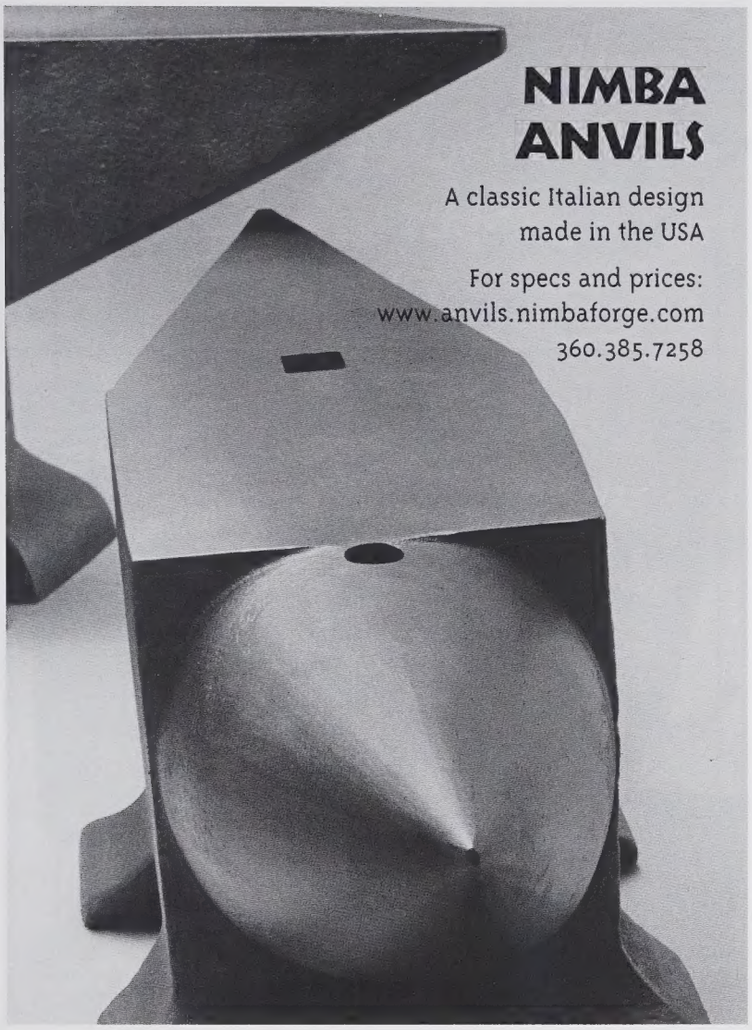

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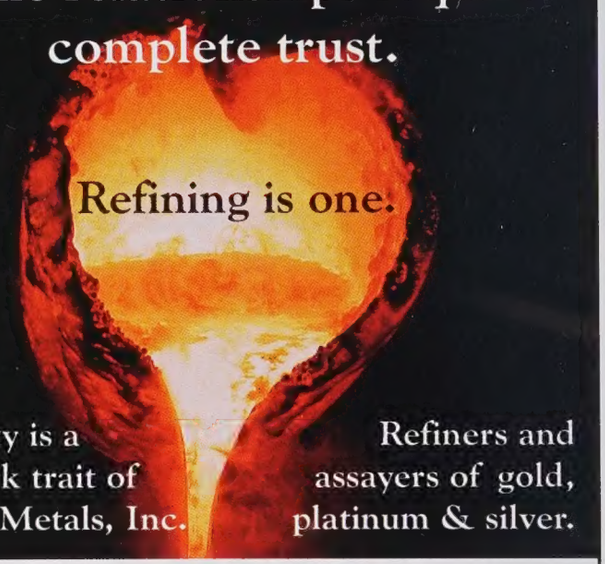

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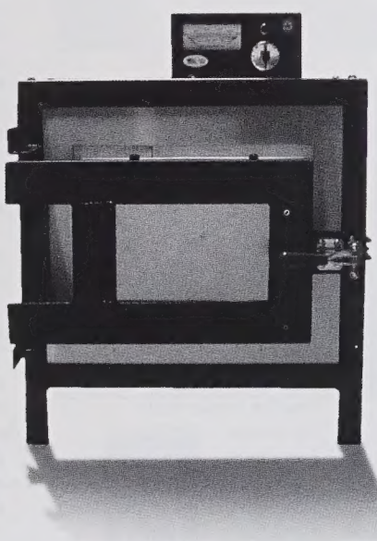

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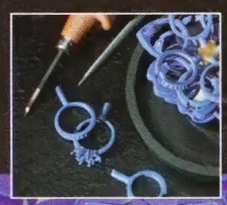

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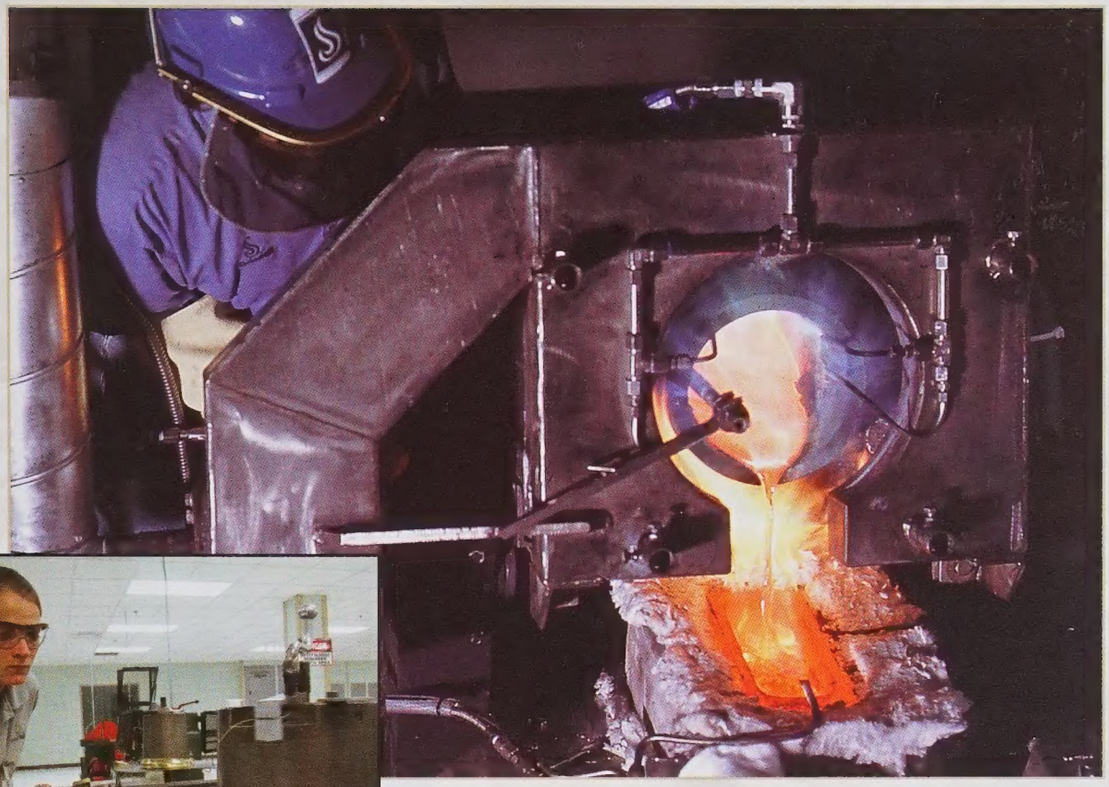

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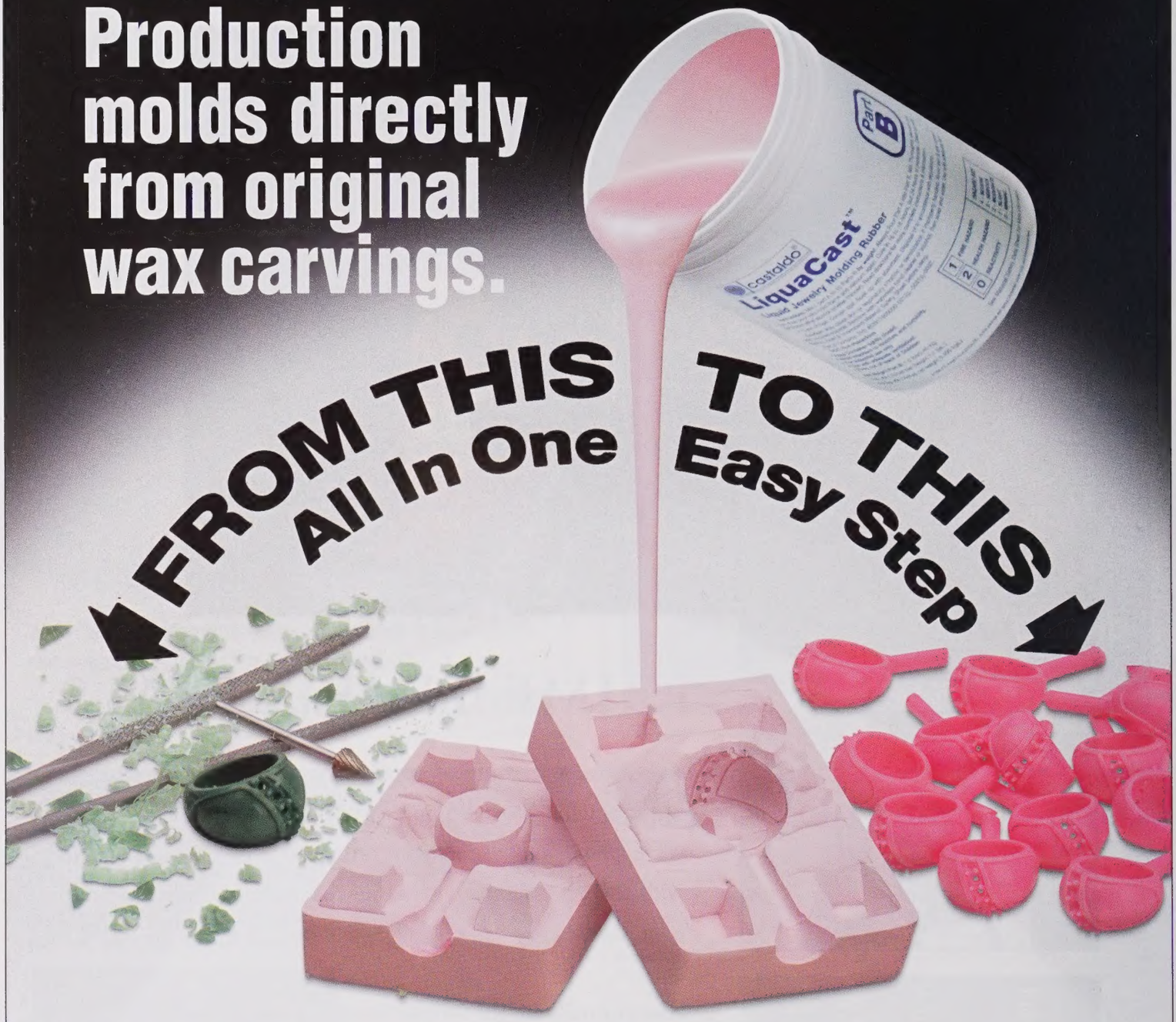

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Myra Mimlitsch-Gray
Cup with Oval, 1998
sterling silver
5 x 4 x 3"
Photo: Robert Storm

Biba Schutz
Ceremonial Pendant, 1998
copper, sterling, fine silver
4 3/4 x 1 1/4 x 1 1/2"
Photo: Ron Boszko

(Summer 2003 *Metalsmith*)
cover: Manfred Bischoff
Brothers (brooch), 2001
Courtesy Joseph Kosuth and
Cornelia Lauf, Rome

Helen Shirk
Sustaining Sprit XXVII, 2000
copper, patina, colored pencils
6 x 23 x 23"

Whitney Boin
Post Engagement Ring, 1996
produced since 1988
platinum, 18k
Photo: Todd Flashner

I am a thinker. I look for things to figure out, and I figure out **how to make things work**—I invent. The process, the fas**cination, the persistence, the** will to understand build into an over-riding passion.

For me, thinking is linked with artistic ability. I think about process, I apply symbolic value to materials. I synthesize & analyze. And somehow through this joyful, committed process, I end up making artistic leaps.

A friend said that I use **"a scientist's syst**ematic approach, an inventor**'s inquisitiveness** and an artist's eye"—always the problem-solver. That flash of putting it all together, that moment of invention is literally a burst of ins**ight. It's** the small satori, a flash of the whole picture**. It's that** blissful moment of "Aha!"

Thought is my materi**al. It's my** medium for understanding what **fascinates** me—process, met**al-working, creating, breathing. I dis**cover new **ways to look at what I already know**. It allows me to experiment with process. It makes me *listen* to the metal so it can do what it wants to do. It helps me invent an easier way to work so I have more fun, creative time.

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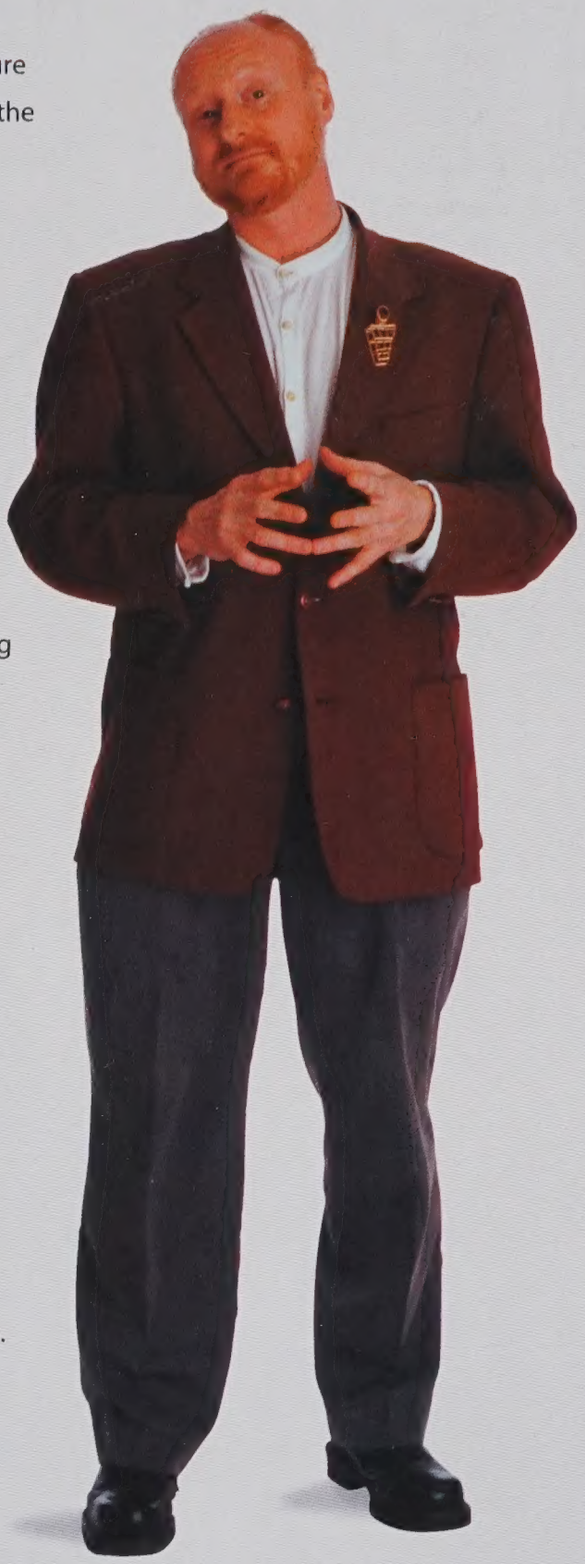

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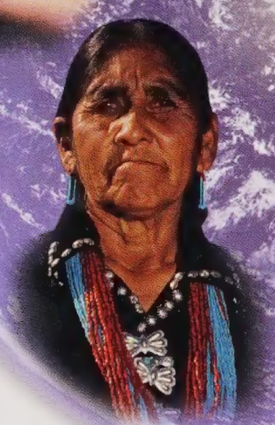

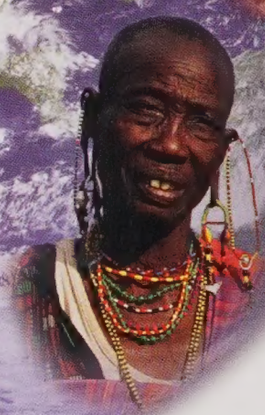

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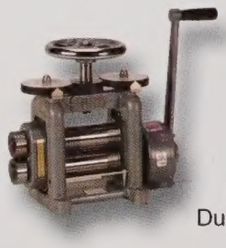

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